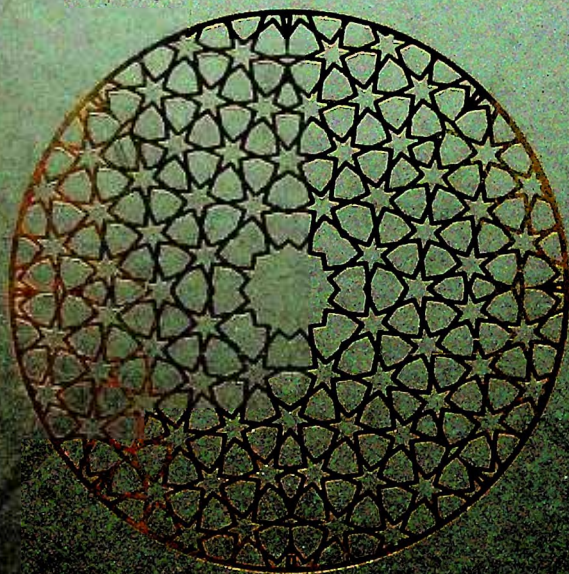


VOLUME I

TREATISES OF
IMAM
AL-GHAZĀLĪ



ADVICE FROM
IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ

TRANSLATED BY KHALID WILLIAMS

This collection, **ADVICE FROM IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ**, contains five treatises that share a common theme, that of offering counsel in matters of religious doctrine and practice as well as secular concerns: *Bidāyat al-hidāya* ("The Beginning of Guidance", a simple guide to living a religious life), *al-Risāla al-Wa'ziyya* ("Counsels to a Dear Brother"), *al-Adab fi al-Dīn* ("Good Conduct and Manners in Islam"), *al-Qawā'id al-'ashr* ("The Ten Precepts"), *al-Kashf wal-tabyīn fi ghurūr al-khalq ajma'in* ("The Delusions of Mankind"), and *Ayyuhā al-Walad* ("Dear Son").

Imam Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 CE) is unquestionably among the foremost figures in the spiritual literature of Islam—and indeed of the entire world. Until now, however, many of his writings have only been accessible to those able to read Arabic. With the appearance in fluent English translations of this collection of Imam al-Ghazālī's shorter treatises, Ihya Publishing has taken an important step to fill the gap.

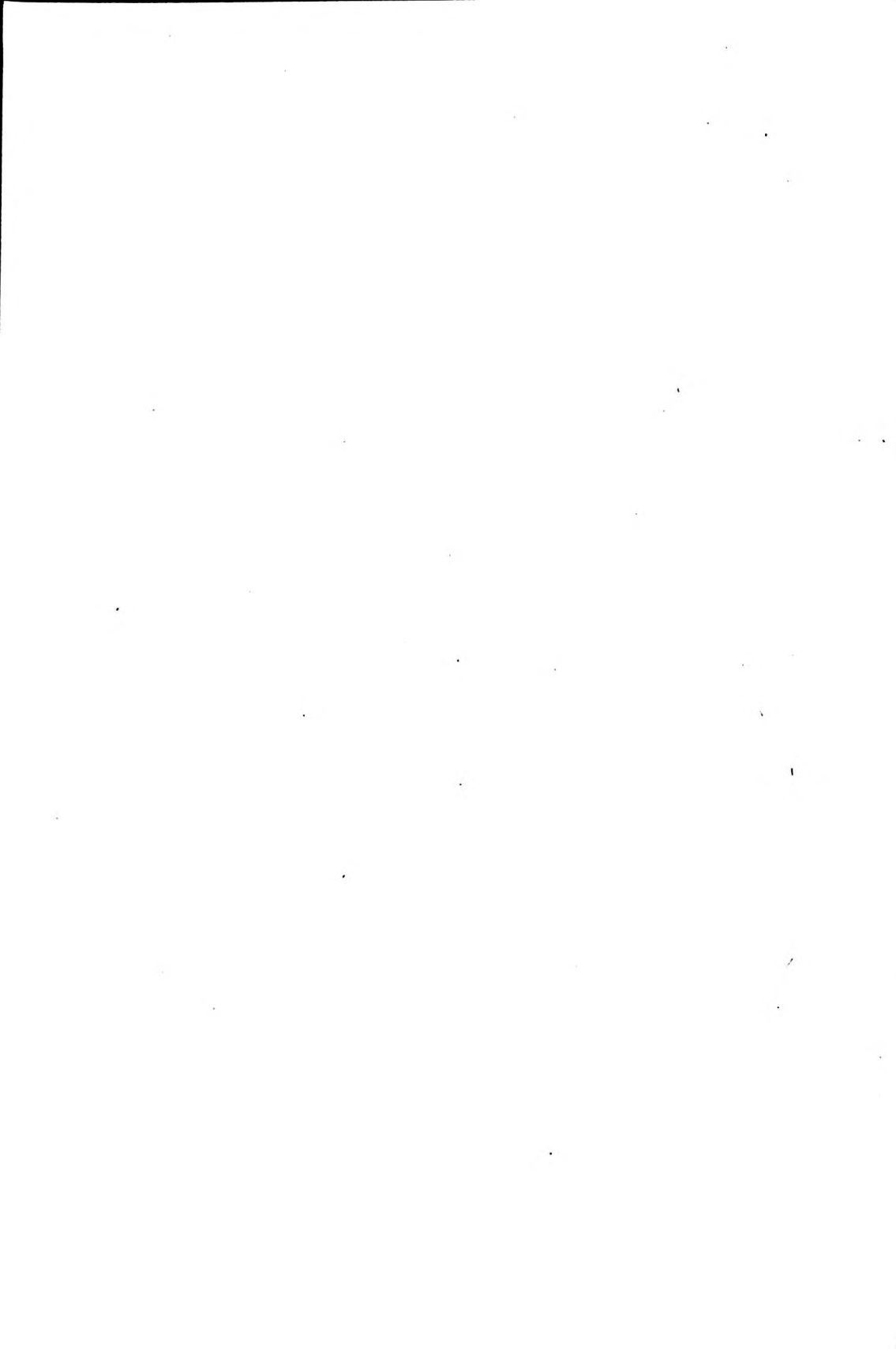




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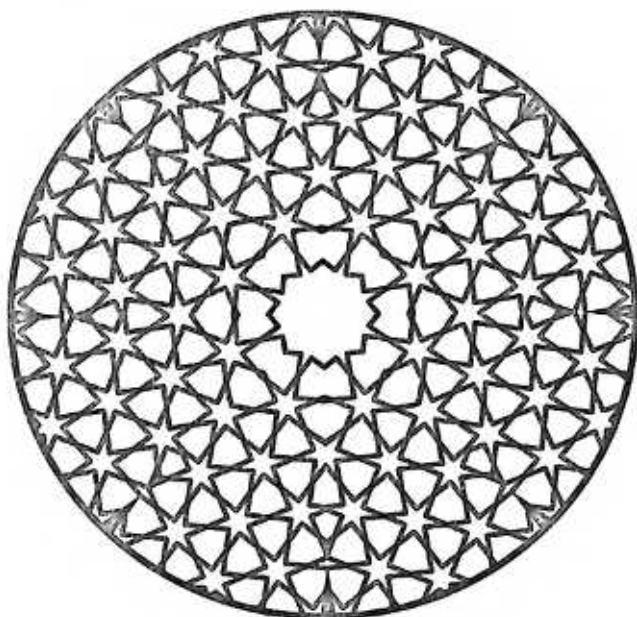
*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

ADVICE FROM IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ



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IMAM
AL-GHAZĀLĪ



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*The essence of knowledge is to know
what obedience and worship are.*

IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ

TRANSLITERATION KEY

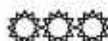
• (h) ' (A slight catch in the breath. It is also used to indicate where the <i>hamza</i> has been dropped from the beginning of a word.)	ق q (A guttural <i>q</i> sound with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)
ا a, ā	ك k
ب b	ل l
ت t	م m
ث th (Should be pronounced as the <i>th</i> in <i>thin</i> or <i>thirst</i> .)	ن n
ج j	و w, ū, u.
ح h (Tensely breathed <i>h</i> sound.)	ه h
خ kh (Pronounced like the <i>ch</i> in Scottish <i>loch</i> with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	ي y, ī, i
د d	سalla 'Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam—used following the mention of the Messenger Muḥammad, translated as, "May Allāh bless him and give him peace."
ذ dh (Should be pronounced as the <i>th</i> in <i>this</i> or <i>that</i> .)	'Alayhi 'l-salām—used following the mention of a prophet or messenger of Allāh, translated as, "May the peace of Allāh be upon him."
ر r	Раḍiya 'Llāhu 'anhu—used following the mention of a Companion of the Messenger, translated as, "May Allāh be pleased with him."
ز z	Раḍiya 'Llāhu 'anhā—used following the mention of a female Companion of the Messenger ﷺ, translated as, "May Allāh be pleased with her."
س s	Раḥimahu 'Llāh—used following the mention of a scholar or pious individual, translated as, "May Allāh have mercy on him."
ش sh	Раḥimahumu 'Llāh—used following the mention of more than one scholar or pious individual, translated as, "May Allāh have mercy on them."
ص ṣ (A heavy <i>s</i> pronounced far back in the mouth with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	
ض ḍ (A heavy <i>d/dh</i> pronounced far back in the mouth with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	
ط ṭ (A heavy <i>t</i> pronounced far back in the mouth with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	
ظ ṭh (A heavy <i>dh</i> pronounced far back in the mouth with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	
ع 'a, 'i, 'u (Pronounced from the throat.)	
غ gh (Pronounced like a throaty French <i>r</i> with the mouth hollowed to produce a full sound.)	
ف f	



CONTENTS

Translator's Introduction to Treatises of Imam al-Ghazālī	1
About the Author	5
Advice from Imam al-Ghazālī	13
THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE (<i>Bidāyat al-hidāya</i>)	
Author's Introduction	23
Chapter 1: Obedience	28
Chapter 2: Avoidance of Sin	66
Chapter 3: Good Conduct in the Company of Others	87
COUNSELS TO A DEAR BROTHER (<i>Al-Risāla al-ṭawā'ziyya</i>)	
A letter from Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī to Shaykh Abūl-Faṭḥ Aḥmad ibn Salāma al-Dimamī	103
GOOD CONDUCT AND MANNERS IN ISLAM (<i>Al-Adab fī al-dīn</i>)	
	113
THE TEN PRECEPTS (<i>Al-Qawā'id al-ʿashr</i>)	
	147
THE DELUSIONS OF MANKIND (<i>Al-Kashf wal-tabyīn fī ghurūr al-khalq aḥma'in</i>)	
Author's Introduction	159
The Delusions of the Disbelievers	161

The Delusions of Sinful Believers	165
The Four Chief Categories of Deluded People	168
DEAR SON (<i>Ayyuhā al-Walad</i>)	199
Endnotes	224





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION TO TREATISES OF IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ

Collections of Imam al-Ghazālī's shorter treatises were published several times in the 14th/20th century by a number of Arabic publishing houses, under various titles. Most of them contained the same texts, though sometimes presented in different orders. The *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī* edited by Ibrāhīm Amīn Muḥammad and published by al-Maktaba al-Tawfīqiyya (Cairo, n.d.) is one such example. Those compilations formed the basis for the treatises selected for translation in this collection, but the texts they contain are not wholly reliable. Fortunately, however, it has been possible to find superior editions of most of the treatises concerned to use as the basis for the translations.

Of the treatises included in that collection, all but four were selected for inclusion. The four omitted are the following.

Qawā'id al-'aqā'id fī al-tawḥīd. This is not an independent treatise, but rather an outtake from Book Two of the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. There is a full translation of this Book: *The Principles of the Creed: Book Two of The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, tr. Khalid Williams (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2016).

Khulāṣat al-taṣānif fī al-taṣawwuf. This misleadingly named text is a translation by Amīn al-Kurḍī of a Persian version of *Ayyūha al-walad* (Dear Son), which is included in this collection. It is not a translation of the Persian original, which was apparently never made publicly available, but rather a translation from Arabic into Persian, which al-Kurḍī subsequently found and translated back into Arabic.

Al-Mawāʿiz fī al-aḥādith al-quḍsiyya. This is not a selection of Sacred Hadiths, as the title suggests, but rather a collection of aphorisms inspired by tradition. It is unlikely to have been compiled by al-Ghazālī himself. A translation has been published by Tarek Alhariri, Yaseen Christian Andrewsen, Aamir Bashir, Imane El-Marzouki, and Arthur Schechter, who also undertook the daunting task of tracing back as much of the text as possible to its sources in the early Islamic tradition: *Imām Ghazālī's Book of Counsels* (London: Turath Publishing, 1441/2020).

Sirr al-ʿālamayn. Among the treatises selected for inclusion in this collection are some which cannot be conclusively attributed to Imām al-Ghazālī but are nevertheless “Ghazālīan” in tone and content. With *Sirr al-ʿālamayn*, however, this does not apply. It contains several anachronisms as well as much that goes against the spirit of all the Imam’s writings; and informed opinion appears to be unanimous, among Muslim scholars as well as orientalists, that the work is not al-Ghazālī’s.

Aside from these four, all the other treatises from *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī* have been included in these collections. Although a few are of questionable attribution to al-Ghazālī, the decision was made to include them in order to be as comprehensive as possible. In each case where such doubts exist, the fact is noted in the introduction to the relevant selection of treatises.

Rather than publish all the treatises in a single volume, we have chosen to present them as five smaller, specialized selections

arranged by theme: *Advice from Imam al-Ghazālī*, *Imām al-Ghazālī on Sufism*, *Imām al-Ghazālī on Cosmology*, *Imām al-Ghazālī on Truth*, and *Imām al-Ghazālī on Knowledge*. Naturally there is some overlap among these themes—most if not all of al-Ghazālī's writings are concerned with truth and knowledge and offer guidance to the reader, many are informed by Sufism, and many display his interest in cosmology—but the grouping was based on the most central concern of each treatise.

Advice From Imam al-Ghazālī comprises those of the author's treatises that share a common theme of advice for the reader in matters of religious doctrine and praxis as well as secular concerns.

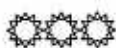
Imam al-Ghazālī on Sufism comprises the treatises in which Sufism—the purification of the soul, and the inward journey to God through the methods described by Muslim mystics, and gnosis, or direct cognition of God—is the most prominent theme of the text.

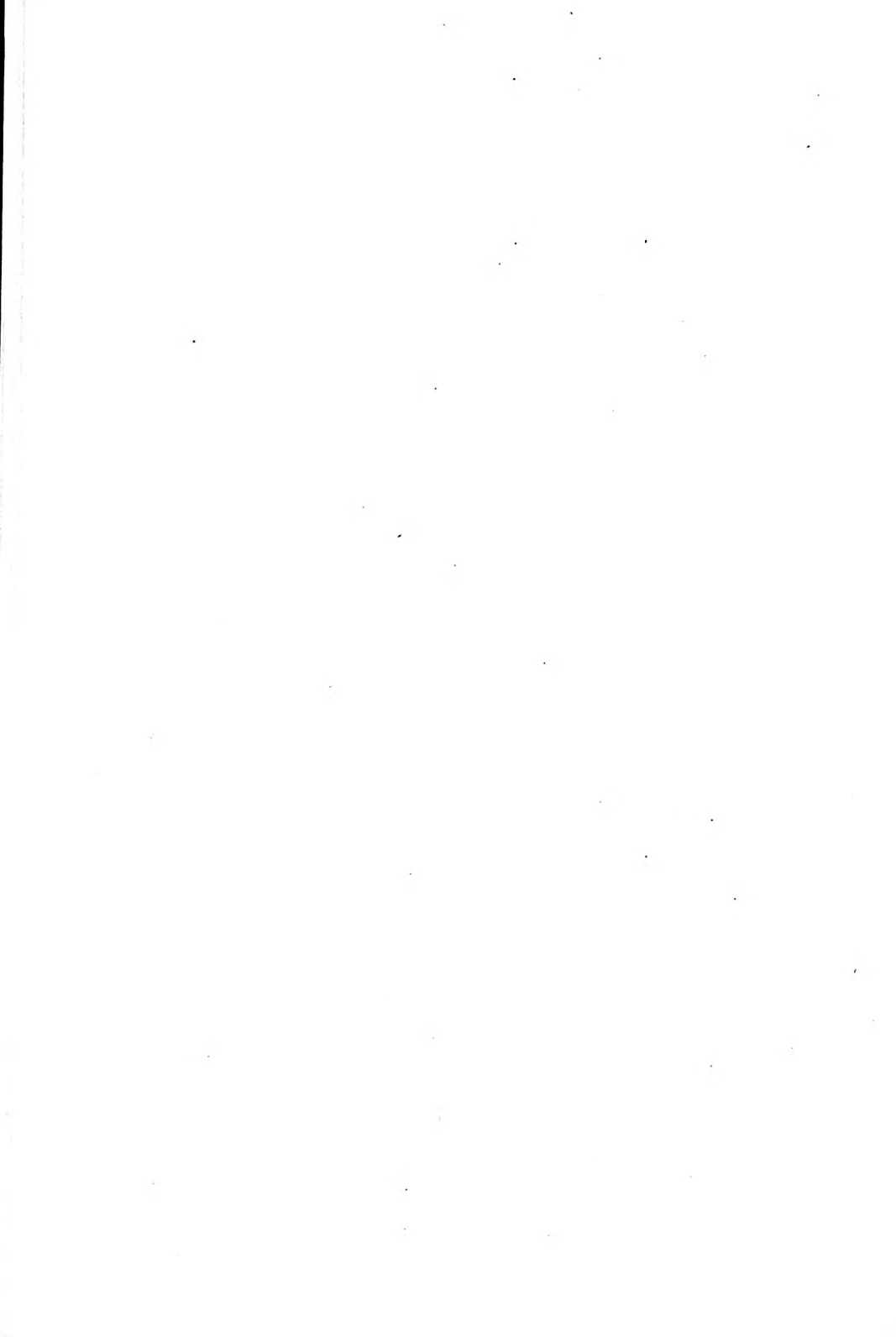
Imam al-Ghazālī on Cosmology comprises the treatises whose main themes are cosmology, the wonders of creation as spiritual allegory and a means for knowing God, and eschatology.

Imam al-Ghazālī on Truth comprises the treatises that are most concerned with the nature of truth, the degree to which human beings can identify it, and the means by which they may seek it.

Imam al-Ghazālī on Knowledge comprises the treatises that are most concerned with the subject of knowledge: its differing levels, the means by which it is sought, its functions, and its benefits as well as its dangers.

The translator and editor of these treatises wish to express their gratitude to Mr Athar Jatoi of Ihya Publishing for giving them the opportunity to contribute to the knowledge and understanding in the English language of Imam al-Ghazālī's priceless heritage. All praise be to God, Lord of the Universe.







ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī was born in the year 450/1059 in the Ṭābarān district of Ṭūs, a town near the modern city of Mashhad in northeastern Persia. The origin of his family name is uncertain; it may derive from Ghazāla, purportedly a village near Ṭūs, or from the word *ghazzāl*, "spinner of wool," said to have been a hereditary occupation in his family, or from some other unknown source.

Ibn al-Subkī and others relate that al-Ghazālī's father died when he and his brother Aḥmad were still young, and that before his passing he asked a local Sufi to take his young sons into his care and teach them how to read and write, leaving what little money he had to fund their education. The Sufi cared for them until the funds ran out and he found himself unable to support them. He then advised them to become full-time students of the Islamic sciences at the local madrasa, where they would have room and board. In his later years al-Ghazālī would say when recalling these beginnings, "We sought knowledge for the sake of something other than God, but He insisted that it be for His sake."

Al-Ghazālī studied jurisprudence in his hometown under a local scholar by the name of Aḥmad al-Rādhukānī. He then travelled to Gurgān (in Arabic, Jurjān) near the Caspian Sea, where for a time he furthered his studies under Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī, before heading back to Ṭūs with all the notes he had taken during those lessons. But on the way home he was accosted by bandits who

seized all of his luggage and made off with it. Distraught at the loss of his notes, al-Ghazālī pursued them and begged them to return the notes to him, since they were of no value to them. The bandit leader asked him why he needed them, and al-Ghazālī replied, "I traveled all the way here just to hear them and write them down, so I could acquire the knowledge they contain." The bandit leader laughed and said "What kind of knowledge can you claim, that we can take from you and leave you bereft of it?" Then he gave the notes back to him. Al-Ghazālī later recalled, "God put those words in his mouth to set me straight." Upon returning to Tūs, he spent the next three years committing those notes to memory, so that his knowledge could never again be stolen from him.

Al-Ghazālī then travelled to Nishapur and became a student of the renowned Persian jurist and theologian al-Juwaynī, known as Imām al-Haramayn, "the Imam of the Two Sanctuaries," because of the time he had spent teaching in Mecca and Medina. He quickly became one of al-Juwaynī's foremost students. Nishapur was the most important center of Sufism in the Khorasan region, and while there al-Ghazālī studied under Abū 'Alī Fārmadī, who had been the disciple of three notable masters: Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī al-Khayr, Abūl-Qāsim Kharaqānī (or Kurrakānī), and Abūl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. Al-Ghazālī remained in Nishapur until the deaths of his two teachers. Then in 478/1085, he joined the court of Nizām al-Mulk, the vizier of the Saljūq (Seljuk) sultan and a patron of scholarship. There he rose to great prominence, gaining the respect and admiration of his peers and of the vizier, who in 484/1091 made him a professor at his prestigious Nizāmiyya college in Baghdad.

It was at the Nizāmiyya that al-Ghazālī was to undergo the spiritual crisis which he describes in *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl* (Deliverance from Error). As he tells us there, this crisis was the culmination of a disillusion that had been growing in the Imam for some time, causing him to question the value of his knowledge

and of the entire scholarly vocation. The intellectual pursuits he had once relished began to seem hollow, and he could not shake off the nagging suspicion that the whole enterprise in which he found himself playing a leading role had been performed, just as his original admission to the madrasa in his childhood had been, "for the sake of something other than God." He remained caught between the temptation to hold on to what he had achieved and the urge to leave that life behind, "pulled back and forth by the attractions of worldly desire and the impulses of the Hereafter," until finally in 488/1095 he suffered a breakdown, finding himself altogether incapable of teaching and almost unable to speak or eat. Realizing that he had no choice but to renounce academic life, he left provisions for his family and made arrangements for as quiet an exit as he could manage, ostensibly leaving to perform the Ḥajj. His colleagues, dumbfounded as to how anyone could voluntarily give up a position that all of them coveted, could only imagine that he must have incurred the wrath of the government, or perhaps that the evil eye had fallen upon their profession.

Al-Ghazālī headed first to Syria, where he may have met with the renowned jurist Naṣr al-Maqdisī shortly before the latter's death. In 489/1096, while visiting the shrine of the Prophet Abraham in Hebron (al-Khalil), he made a threefold vow: never again would he accept money from any government, or serve a ruler in any capacity, or engage in scholarly disputations. That same year, from Palestine he traveled to Mecca and Medina, performing the Pilgrimage, before settling for some time in Damascus. The secluded room in the minaret of the Umayyad Mosque in which al-Maqdisī had sat became known as Ghazālī's Corner because of the retreats that he kept there during the two years he spent in the city. Although he tried to keep a low profile and present himself as an anonymous layman, on a few occasions he was unable to keep himself from joining conversations that led to his scholarly prowess

being revealed, risking a breach of his vow and his anonymity. Ibn al-Subkī relates that the last straw came when one day the Imam happened to go into a school in Damascus just as the teacher was quoting from one of al-Ghazālī's own works. Terrified of being stricken with the sin of pride if any more such events occurred, al-Ghazālī left the city at once.

Some biographers say that he went to Egypt and spent some time in Alexandria, himself only mentions visits to Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina. Whether al-Ghazālī was following the guidance of a spiritual master, either during this period or subsequently, is unknown.

Shortly afterwards al-Ghazālī quietly returned home, the pleas of his children having swayed him from his initial determination to spend the rest of his life wandering. He endeavored instead to live in seclusion at home and to make his journey a spiritual rather than a physical one, apparently treading the Sufi path in isolation. He complains in the *Deliverance* that he rarely managed to find the isolation he sought, but it proved sufficient to solve his spiritual crisis and provide him with the direction that he was to follow for the rest of his life. He certainly kept hidden enough to have confused his colleagues and future biographers as to his whereabouts during those years; even his own student 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī insisted in his biography that al-Ghazālī spent not two but ten years in Damascus, and that it was there that he composed his magnum opus *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences).

It was in the *Revival* that the lessons al-Ghazālī had learned during his time in isolation came to their ultimate fruition. The revival he sought was not a reformation of Islam but a renewal of its spiritual dimension, a reinforcement of the pillars of sincerity and God-consciousness coupled with accurate and appreciative knowledge. The key lesson al-Ghazālī learned from the Sufis

was the central importance of *dhawq*, "tasting," the experiential dimension of religion that cannot be described or taught but only lived. He saw the root cause of the spiritual malaise both in the scholarly establishment and in the wider Muslim community as being the loss of this tasting, this firsthand connection to God and the truths of religion. For the rest of his days al-Ghazālī sought to revive it, in his written works as well as his teaching in mosques, schools, and his own Sufi lodge in Tūs. So crucial is the concept to his later writing that some academics have called the latter part of his life his "*dhawq* period." Most of the treatises that form the present collection were authored in that time, and some may be considered as commentaries on matters the author touched on in the *Revival*.

In 499/1106 the Seljuq vizier Fakhr al-Mulk persuaded al-Ghazālī to return to the Nizāmiyya—this time to the branch of the institute in Nishapur, rather than Baghdad—and al-Ghazālī accepted, having been advised by several of his fellow Sufis that it was time to return to public life, to share what he had learned with others. His colleagues were astonished at how utterly changed he was; ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī tells of how the haughty and supercilious professor of old had been replaced by a man of the utmost humility and piety, and assures us that despite his initial suspicions he soon became convinced that this was no act but a genuine transformation. Al-Fārisī also notes that in his later years al-Ghazālī turned to the study of Hadith, the one major branch of the Islamic sciences that he perhaps had not fully mastered; had he lived, says al-Fārisī, he would have become the foremost expert in that science, too.

After a short time at the Nizāmiyya, al-Ghazālī returned to Tūs and spent the rest of his days teaching in the Sufi lodge that he established next to his house, and dividing his time between worship, teaching, and writing. His *Kīmīyā-yi sa‘ādat* (Alchemy

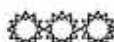
of Happiness), a Persian adaptation and abridgement of *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, dates from this period. His final work was most likely *Iljām al-'awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* (Protection of the Masses from Theology). It was completed only a few days before his death, which occurred on Monday 14th Jumādā al-Ākhir, 505/18th December, 1111. His brother Aḥmad provides a simple account of his final moments:

"On Monday at dawn, my brother Abū Hāmid performed ablutions and prayed, then said, 'Bring me my burial shroud.' He took the shroud, kissed it, placed it over his eyes, and said, 'I hear and obey, and I enter the presence of the King!' Then he stretched out his legs and laid down facing the *Qibla*, and before the sun was up he was dead."

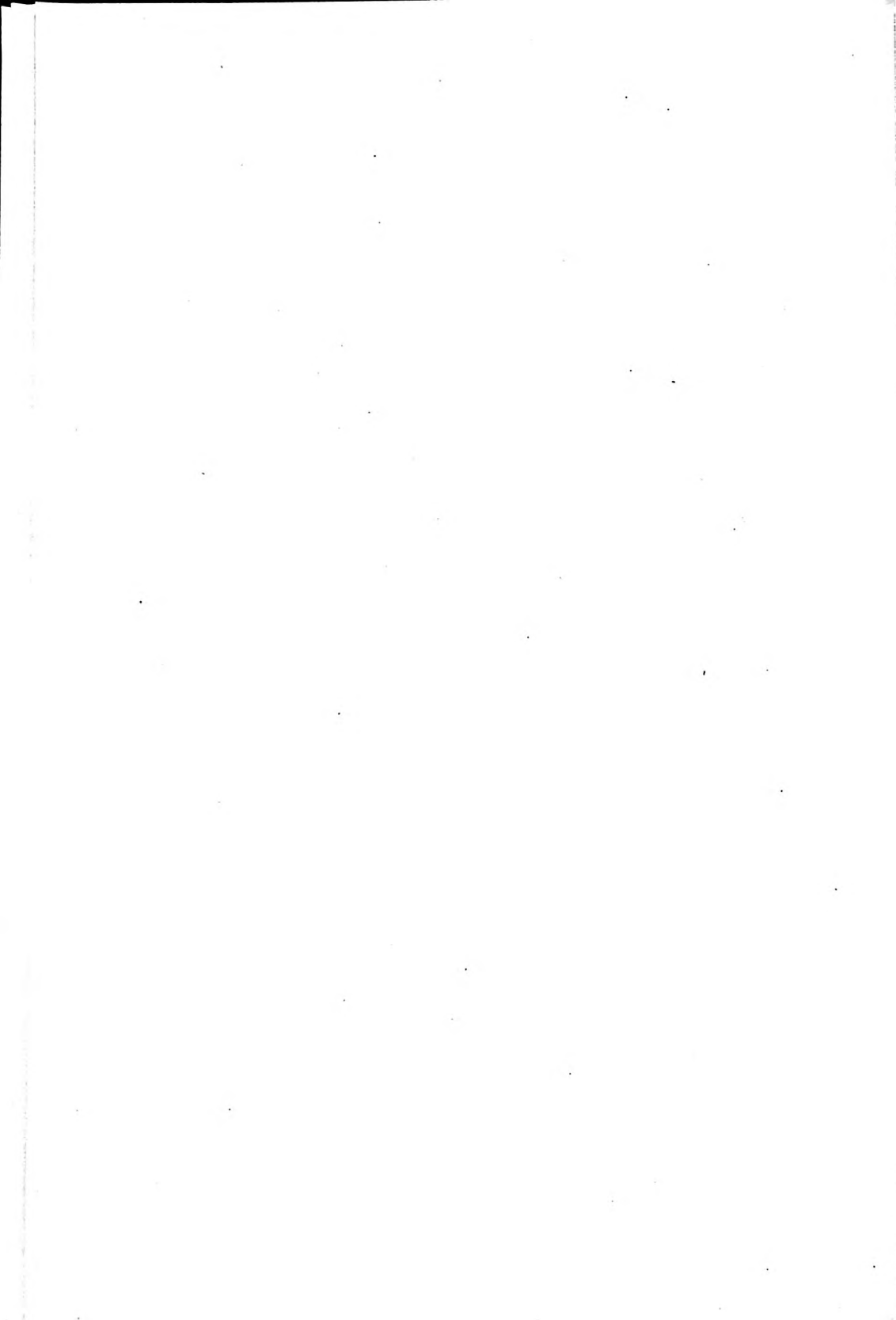
The significance of al-Ghazālī's contribution to the Islamic tradition is almost impossible to overstate. Almost immediately he became known as *Hujjat al-Islām*, "the Proof of Islam," in recognition of his importance and the immensity of his contribution in many fields of Islamic learning, and his works became known as authoritative references for most branches of the Islamic sciences. His commentator Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī summed up the prevailing attitude toward *The Revival of Religious Sciences* among the Muslim scholarly class as follows: "Were the entire corpus of Islamic literature to be lost, with only the *Ihyā'* remaining, it would be sufficient to stand for them all."

Al-Ghazālī is widely believed to have been the fifth *Mujaddid*, the Renewer of Islam who the Prophet ﷺ foretold would appear at the turn of each century. His polemics against the excesses of philosophy and the prevailing heresies of the age had a significant impact in strengthening the status of Sunni Islam, and his advocacy for Sufism did much to consolidate its status as an integral part of Islam, a science with deep roots in the tradition, offering a path to truth and salvation based not on speculative thought or blind

conformity, but on firsthand experience and direct communion with God. His influence also extended, in various ways, beyond the Islamicate world, with many learned Christians acknowledging his greatness. The Imam's works embrace a wide variety of disciplines, including Sufism, ethics, statesmanship, practicalities of Muslim worship and daily life, theology, jurisprudence, and Qur'ānic studies, in all of which he produced books of immense and lasting significance. These continue to guide, inform, and enlighten, nine centuries after their author's passing.ⁱ



i General surveys of al-Ghazālī's writings (the more useful of which take into account important questions of attribution) are to be found in various books and articles. A good example is Gerhard Böwering's article 'al-Gazālī, Abū Ḥāmed Moḥammad. i. Biography' in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, accessible online at www.iranicaonline.org. The virtual online library www.ghazali.org is also an invaluable resource, and proved immensely helpful during the preparation of these translations.





ADVICE FROM IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ

All of Imam al-Ghazālī's works offer guidance and counsel to the reader, whether it be help in identifying truth from falsehood and escaping confusion, as in his polemical works; assistance toward reaching a greater level of understanding, as in his epistemological and mystical works; or exhortation and guidance toward greater piety and religiosity, as in his didactic works. It is this last category that we have in mind for this collection, which comprises those of the author's treatises that share a common theme of advice for the reader in matters of religious doctrine and praxis as well as secular concerns.

The Beginning of Guidance (*Bidāyat al-hidāya*)

A natural choice to begin with is al-Ghazālī's *Beginning of Guidance*, a treatise written expressly for aspiring seekers of religious knowledge.ⁱ As the title indicates, the author intended it as the starting-point for anyone wishing to pursue the subjects he examines in his other works. Time and again throughout his writings al-Ghazālī laments the general lack of a strong religious sentiment underpinning the Islamic institutions of his time, which although superficially flourishing were spiritually poor. The author insists that religious

i An English translation of this treatise by Dr Mashhad al-Allaf, with facing Arabic text and transliterations for the supplications and invocations, was published by White Thread Press in 2010.

scholars must first and foremost be pious and devout, so that throughout their training and practice they never lose sight of the ultimate goal of all learning, which is salvation in the Hereafter. *The Beginning of Guidance* is a text greatly revered, and much used and cited, in centers of learning throughout the Muslim world; in some, tradition dictates that students be permitted to wear the turban only after they have made all of al-Ghazālī's prescriptions in the book their invariable practice.

Al-Ghazālī divides the work into three parts: acts of worship, avoidance of sin, and good conduct in the company of others. In Part 1 he runs through the activities of the day, recommending supplications and invocations to recite throughout them, as well as the correct attitudes to maintain during these activities and rites. He stresses the vital importance of maintaining presence of heart throughout one's acts of worship in order to maintain awareness of one's connection with God. In Part 2 the author describes the different types of sin and how they relate to the parts of the body and the faculties of the soul. He provides remedies for each type of sin, and describes the pitfalls associated with them. Parts 1 and 2 together provide "a brief overview of the outward science of God-consciousness, which is the *Beginning of Guidance*." Once the reader masters them, al-Ghazālī tells us, he will be ready to move on to *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

Finally, Part 3 provides advice relating to conduct in the company of others—in the company of God first of all, and then in that of one's fellow humans in different relationships. In every case, al-Ghazālī stresses the need for humility and compassion. He warns against too much socializing and advises us to choose our friends wisely, and above all to seek out those who will help us draw nearer to God.

Counsels to a Dear Brother (*al-Risāla al-Waʿziyya*)

Counsels to a Dear Brother is a letter to a certain Shaykh Abū-Faṭḥ al-Dimamī, who had requested advice from Imam al-Ghazālī regarding “the things that every accountable person must believe.” The author begins by suggesting that the looming presence of death ought to be admonition enough for anyone, and wonders why it rarely is. He describes his own efforts to search his soul for the answer, and concludes that it is a matter of delusion: “the soul’s trickery can outwit all but the shrewdest people.” By answering a request for advice regarding doctrine with a rejoinder to remember death, al-Ghazālī shows that for him the immediate concern of salvation and the meeting with God always takes precedence over abstruse points of doctrine. Accordingly, he emphasizes that it is sufficient to hold to the fundamental creed of “There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God” and to believe in the Attributes of God without delving into theological explanations of them unless it is strictly necessary; “the quest for God-consciousness is what matters.”

Good Conduct and Manners in Islam (*al-Adab fi al-Dīn*)

This text comprises a series of short paragraphs on various aspects of *adab* (a very important term in Islamic ethics, the meaning of which includes good conduct, manners, and culture) in various aspects of religious and secular life. As always, the author’s advice in this regard boils down to humility, dignity, and God-consciousness.

The Ten Precepts (*al-Qawāʿid al-ʿashr*)

The Ten Precepts is a short treatise comprising ten pieces of general advice ranging from private spiritual matters to social ones. The

authenticity of this treatise has been called into question, as the literary style seems somewhat out of step with al-Ghazālī's norm; but it is difficult to conclude much from so short a work. In any case, the advice offered is fully consonant with his thinking.

The ten precepts are as follows: sound intention, sincerity toward God, submission to Him, obedience to law and ruler, personal initiative, humility, fear and hope, regular spiritual observance, constant self-examination, and finally awareness of one's religious and secular duties. Upon these foundations, as the author puts it, "impregnable castles and towering ramparts may be built with strong stones; with these variegated seeds a great garden may be planted that yields all the crops of eternal felicity."

The Delusions of Mankind

(*Al-Kashf wal-tabyīn fī ghurūr al-khalq ajma'in*)

In *The Delusions of Mankind*, al-Ghazālī describes the different delusions to which human beings are prone, and categorizes them by reference to the various types of people. He begins with the two that are "easiest"—not necessarily to cure, but to identify: the delusions of disbelievers and sinful believers. In both cases the author implies that their delusions amount to misplaced confidence which leads to denial on the surface of truths that are nevertheless recognized in the depths of the heart. Al-Ghazālī quickly dispenses with these delusions and then turns to the more troublesome and pernicious ones that afflict four types of people who may seem to have escaped the grosser delusions of unbelief and sin, yet suffer from their own particular maladies without being aware of it: the learned, the devotees, the wealthy, and the aspiring Sufis. The treatise, then, is a work of traditional Islamic psychology, which is rooted in the key concepts of intention (*niyya*) and sincerity (*ikhhlās*). These demand constant self-scrutiny and vigilant awareness

of God, for what appears outwardly to be healthy and good may be rotten beneath the surface. This inward rottenness was one of al-Ghazālī's chief concerns, especially in the *Revival*, several passages of which are revisited or summarized in this treatise. A sinner may well know himself to be a sinner, and there is reason to hope that he will repent and turn his life around. A deluded preacher or pseudo-Sufi, on the other hand, imagines that he is doing well and does not see any need to repent. This makes him "the most deluded of all, and the most difficult to help or bring back to the right path."

In *The Delusions of Mankind*, then, al-Ghazālī offers us not direct advice but rather a warning of things that we must strive to avoid. This is entirely an inward matter that requires earnest soul-searching, but the author warns that even those who take up the task can run into further difficulties by going to such extremes in ferreting out their personal flaws that they "remain bound to their souls and never connect with their Creator." The intricacies and wonders of the soul must not be allowed to distract the seeker from the goal, which is nothing other than God Himself.

Dear Son (*Ayyuhā al-Walad*)

We end this collection with *Dear Son*, a reply from al-Ghazālī to a letter from a student of his who seems to have been undergoing a crisis of faith not unlike the one which al-Ghazālī himself had experienced several years earlier. Al-Ghazālī describes his own crisis in detail in his treatise *Deliverance from Error*, and it is possible to imagine *Dear Son* as being a letter to his younger self as well as to his student. The introduction to the treatise describes the student's letter in general terms as a request for guidance as to which branch of knowledge is most important for a person's prospects in the Hereafter. However, this introduction is written

from the perspective of a third party and was likely added by a copyist to give some context to the work. Several times throughout the treatise, al-Ghazālī refers to a list of questions posed by his student, so we must suppose that the original letter was more detailed, and perhaps more personal, than the overview provided in the introduction.

Al-Ghazālī begins the treatise with an exhortation to praxis, without which knowledge and doctrine have no value. This is a major theme in many of the author's later works, including his magnum opus *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Al-Ghazālī tempers this exhortation with a reminder that deeds too are not to be relied upon, and that salvation depends upon the mercy of God alone. The disciple must validate his knowledge with work, and validate his work with faith in the saving grace of God. In section 4, the author epitomizes this teaching by defining praxis as "preparation for God's mercy." Time and again throughout the treatise he stresses the crucial importance of pursuing knowledge and action for the sake of God, not for any worldly benefit. He is particularly appalled by religious scholars who do not practice what they preach, or who pursue abstruse branches of learning simply for the sake of satisfying their curiosity or winning acclaim from their peers. The cure for this, al-Ghazālī tells us, lies in constant awareness of death: "Put aspiration in your spirit, defeat in your ego, and death in your body. Your home is the grave, and the residents of the grave are expecting you to join them any moment."

Before turning towards more esoteric matters, the author provides the reader with a caveat concerning the importance of conformity to the Sacred Law. He counsels us not to be "misled by the ecstatic utterances of the Sufis," since novices are often particularly attracted to the more exotic side of mysticism, which can give them a false impression of what treading the path actually entails. At this juncture al-Ghazālī also introduces the important Sufi concept

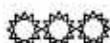
of *dhawq*, “taste,” meaning that which cannot be described in words but must be experienced firsthand. He stresses the need for asceticism and detachment from the world, illustrating this by recounting two anecdotes that sum up the attitude towards knowledge that the Sufi aspirant ought to have. Having laid these foundations, al-Ghazālī then describes the qualities of the true Sufi master—stressing how rare such masters are—and provides definition for some common Sufi terms. Throughout these passages the author maintains a certain reticence, as though he is taking pains to hold back from saying too much; for as he says, some things are “forbidden to set down in writing. Put your knowledge into practice, and things you do not know will be revealed to you.” Al-Ghazālī expands upon this further in *Deliverance from Error* and *Niche of Lights*, which seem to have been authored at around the same time as *Dear Son*. The disciple must commit fully to the spiritual path, and set out on the journey.

Al-Ghazālī ends the treatise with eight items of advice that would have been of particular relevance to religious scholars such as his student. The first four are things that must be avoided. Firstly he counsels against engaging in disputation; this is a recurring theme in the author’s later works, likely based on much experience. If one engages in debate at all, al-Ghazālī says, it ought to be in private, and only when one genuinely intends to determine the truth rather than simply to defeat one’s opponent. Ignorance, in his view, is a sickness that is often difficult or impossible to remedy, and “the perfect scholar does not treat every patient, but only those he has reason to hope will accept the treatment and make a recovery.” Secondly, al-Ghazālī warns his student not to engage in preaching unless it is unavoidable, since the risk of falling into hypocrisy by failing to practice what one preaches is so high. He criticizes the pretentious language often employed by preachers, which does not at all benefit something so urgent as a warning against damnation.

The preacher must not seek to entertain his audience, but rather to inspire them to better themselves. Thirdly and fourthly, al-Ghazālī warns of the dangers of involvement in politics and keeping the company of rulers or accepting gifts from them.

The latter four items of the list are things that must be accomplished: be a dutiful servant to God, treat others as you would like them to treat you, live as though death is imminent, and rely on God rather than amassing much wealth.

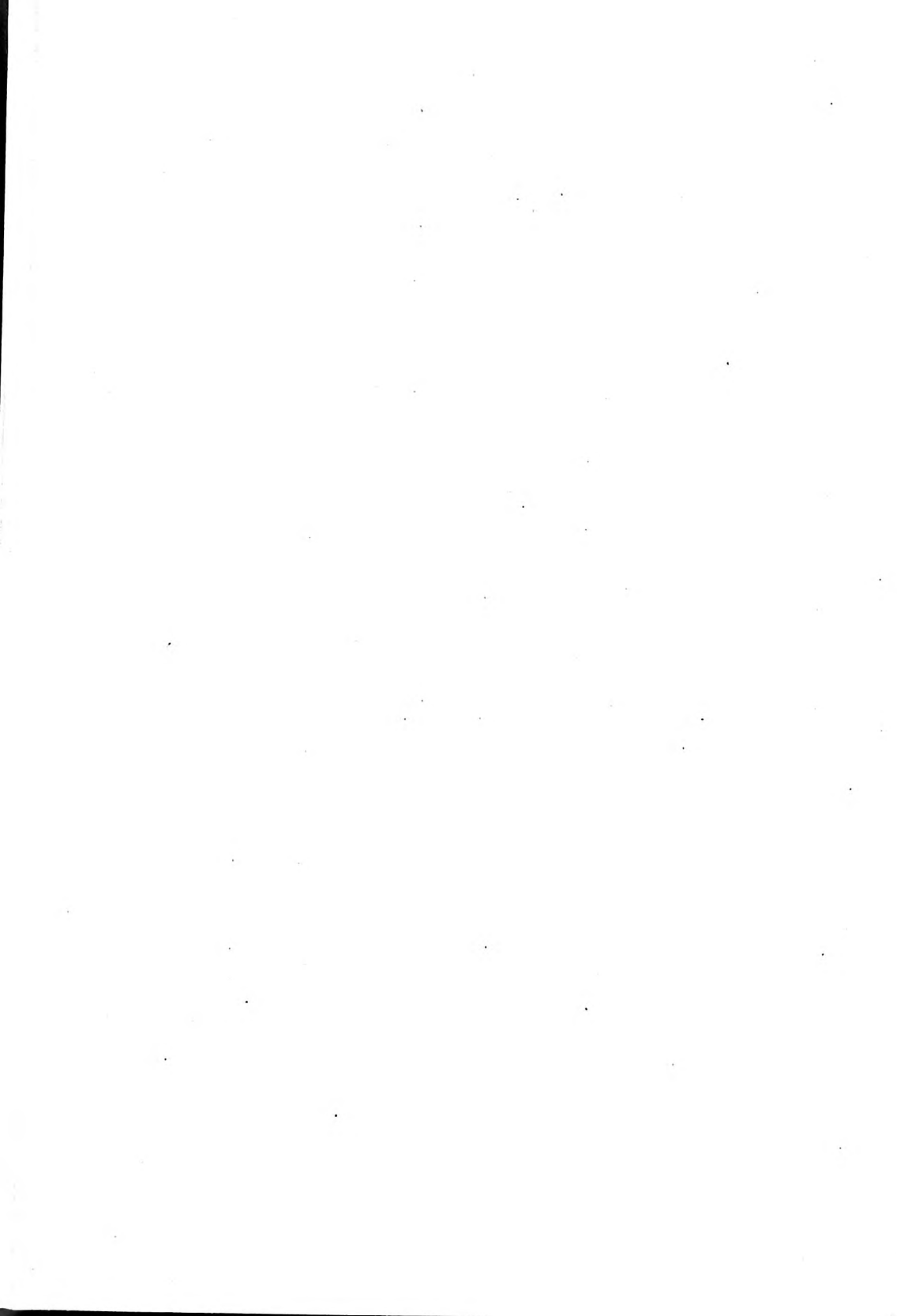
After a final reminder of the immanence of death and the vital importance of preparing for it, the author ends by recommending a supplication for his student to read, as he had requested. The supplication is in a sense a summary of the whole treatise: a petition to God for protection in the world from anything that might cause regret in the Hereafter; an expression of total reliance upon the saving grace of God; and a request for a life lived in blessed preparation for death and what lies beyond it.





THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE

Bidāyat al-hidāya





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Praise be to God as is His rightful due, and may blessings and peace be upon the best of His creation, Muḥammad, and upon his Family and Companions after him.

To proceed: Dear aspirant, you wish to attain knowledge, and you show yourself to be genuine in your desire and thirst for it. But if your aim is to learn for the sake of competing, boasting, outdoing your peers, drawing attention to yourself, and amassing worldly riches, then you are well on the way to ruining your religion and destroying yourself. For that would mean trading away your Hereafter for your worldly life, which is a losing bargain and a profitless exchange. Your teacher would only be aiding you in your sin and sharing in your loss, as though selling a sword to a highway robber. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The one who aids in a sin, even if only with half a word, is a participant in it."

If, however, your intention in seeking knowledge—which is between you and God Most High—is to attain guidance and not merely to engage in transmission, then be of good cheer, for the angels will spread out their wings for you when you walk, and the fish in the sea will pray for forgiveness for you when you run.

Nevertheless, you must know before everything else that guidance, which is the fruit of knowledge, has a beginning and an end, an outward and an inward aspect. One cannot reach the end without first mastering the beginning, nor discover the inward aspect without grasping the outward. I shall therefore direct you towards the Beginning of Guidance, that you may test your heart and your soul. If you find that your heart inclines towards it and your soul yields to it and accepts it, then you are ready to embark upon your quest for the end, and to plunge into the oceans of knowledge. If, however, you find that upon being confronted by it your heart begins to procrastinate and is reluctant to act upon it, then know that the aspect of your soul that inclines towards the pursuit of knowledge is the evil-enjoining soul, and that it has been stirred in obedience to Satan the accursed, so that he may lead you on with his deceptions and draw you step by step into the pit of ruin. His intent is to present evil to you in the guise of goodness, so as to make you join *the greatest losers in their works: those whose effort goes astray in the present life, while they imagine they are doing good* (Qur'ān 18:103-104).

Thus Satan regales you with talk of the great merit of knowledge and the high rank of the learned, and all the traditional reports and accounts concerning this. Yet he makes you forget that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever grows in knowledge but not in guidance only grows farther from God;"² and "The person punished most severely on the Day of Resurrection will be the learned man whom God did not cause to benefit from his knowledge;"³ and how he ﷺ used to say, "Dear God, I seek refuge with You from knowledge without benefit, a heart without humility, a deed that is not lifted up,⁴ and a supplication that is not heard."⁴ He ﷺ also

i Meaning a deed which although of a good kind is not acceptable to God, perhaps because of the intention behind it. The expression "lifted up" is probably an allusion to Qur'ān 35:10.

said, "On the night of my Ascension, I passed by people whose lips were being cut with shears of fire. I said, 'Who are you?' They replied, 'We used to preach goodness, but we did not practice it; and we used to forbid evil, but we committed it.'"⁵

Beware then, poor fellow, of falling for his guile, lest he lead you on with his deceptions. Woe to the ignorant one who has not learned even once; and woe a thousand times over to the learned one who has not acted upon what he learned!

Know also that in regard to the pursuit of knowledge, people are of three kinds. One seeks knowledge to take it as a provision for the journey to the Resurrection, and desires nothing from it but the Countenance of God and the life of the Hereafter. Such people are the triumphant.

Another kind seeks it to assist with his ephemeral life and to attain renown, glory, and wealth. He does so knowingly, being aware in his heart of his lowly condition and contemptible aim. Such a person is in peril; if death comes before repentance, there is reason to fear that he will have a bad end, and that his fate will be left to God's will. If he is given the grace to repent before his time comes, and he complements his knowledge with action and makes up for what he has neglected, he will join the ranks of the triumphant. "He who repents of sin is as if sinless."⁶

A third kind is totally overcome by Satan, and uses his knowledge as a means to amass wealth, enjoy renown, and exult in his many followers. He employs his knowledge as a way to open every door, hoping to achieve all of his worldly ambitions. Yet despite all this, he entertains the notion that he has some kind of standing with God simply because he is among the learned and resembles them in their formal comportment and speech, even though he is totally consumed by desire for the world, both outwardly and inwardly. Such people are bound for ruin, foolish and deluded as they are; there is little hope that they will repent, since they

believe themselves to be righteous. They forget that God Most High says, *O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?* (Qur'ān 62:2). It was of such people that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "There is one whom I fear for your sake more than I do the Antichrist." They asked, "Who is that, Messenger of God?" He replied, "Evil scholars."⁷

This is because the Antichrist's mission is to misguide. As for this scholar, he may direct people away from the world with his words, but he calls them towards it with his behavior and character. Actions speak louder than words, and people are naturally more inclined to emulate behavior than to heed speech. The damage that this deluded person does with his deeds outweighs the good he does with his words, for an ignorant man only dares to chase the world because the learned dare to do so. Thus his knowledge becomes the cause for God's servants having the insolence to disobey Him. Yet his ignorant soul continues to indulge his hopes and ambitions, encouraging him to expect a reward from God for his knowledge, and telling him that he is better than many other people.

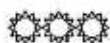
Dear seeker, you must ensure that you are among the first group. Beware of being among the second, for many a procrastinator meets death before repentance and is lost. Above all, beware of being among the third group, lest you be ruined beyond all hope of recovery or salvation.

You may ask, "What is this "Beginning of Guidance," then, so that I may try it out for myself?" Know that its beginning is outward God-consciousness, and its end is inward God-consciousness. Nothing but God-consciousness is of any use, and none are guided but the God-conscious.

"God-consciousness" (*taqwā*) means to heed the commandments and prohibitions of God Most High, and thus comprises two parts. I shall present you with brief summaries of each, to illustrate the outward aspect of the science of God-consciousness, and then add

THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE

a third part to round the book off and make it comprehensive.
Success is from God alone.





CHAPTER I

OBEDIENCE

Know that the commandments of God Most High are divided into those which are obligatory and those which are voluntary. The obligatory ones constitute the capital, the basis of commerce, and the means of salvation. The voluntary ones constitute the profit, by which greater ranks are obtained. The Prophet ﷺ said, "God, Hallowed and Sublime, says: 'No one can draw nearer to Me with anything I love more than the duties I have assigned him; and My servant continues to draw near to me with voluntary deeds until I love him. When I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks'" (Bukhārī 6502).

Dear seeker, you will not truly uphold the commandments of God Most High without vigilantly observing your heart and your limbs at all times and with every breath, from morning to evening. Know that God is aware of whatever is in your mind; He sees your inner and outer being, and encompasses your every glance, your every thought, your every step, your every movement and rest. Whether alone or in company, you are held between His Hands. Nothing within the physical and spiritual realms, whether it be in motion or still, escapes the attention of the Sovereign of

Heaven and Earth. *He knows the treachery of the eyes and what the breasts conceal* (Qur'ān 40:19). *He knows what is secret and what is more hidden still* (Qur'ān 20:7).

Be on your best behavior in His presence then, dear seeker, both outwardly and inwardly, like a wretched and sinful slave in the presence of a powerful and mighty king. Strive to ensure that your Lord does not see you anywhere He forbids you to be, nor miss you anywhere He commands you to be. You will not be able to accomplish this unless you plan out your time and organize your activities from morning to evening. Pay heed to the commandments that are communicated to you from God Most High, from the moment you wake up until you go to bed.

Upon Waking From Sleep

Strive to ensure that you wake up before the break of dawn. The first thing to do, with both heart and tongue, is remember God Most High. Say upon waking, "Praise be to God, Who has given us life after causing us to die; and to Him we shall be raised. Another day dawns, and we and all creation belong to God. Magnificence and authority belong to God, and glory and power belong to God, the Lord of the Worlds! We have reached another dawn following the disposition of Islam, the word of sincerity, the religion of our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and the way of our father Abraham: *a man of pure faith; and he was not one of the idolaters* (Qur'ān 2:135). Dear God, we ask You to send us towards every good today. I seek refuge with You lest I commit any evil today, or bring evil upon any Muslim. Dear God, through You we have reached the morning, through You we reach the night, through You we live, through You we shall die, and to You we shall be raised. We ask You for the best of this day and the best of what it contains, and

we seek refuge with You from the evil of this day and the evil of what it contains."

When you get dressed, make the intention to obey God's commandment to cover your nakedness. Beware of intending by your dress to show off to people, or you will lose out.

Entering the Bathroom

When you go to the bathroom to relieve yourself, enter with the left foot first, and exit with the right. Do not take inside anything bearing the Name of God Most High or that of His Messenger. Do not go in with your head uncovered, nor barefoot. Say before going in, "In the Name of God. I seek refuge with God from impure filth, the foul, defiling one, Satan the accursed." When exiting, say, "Your forgiveness! Praise be to God, who has removed from me what harms me, and retained for me what benefits me."

You must prepare the cleaning material before you relieve yourself, and go elsewhere before using water to clean yourself. You must finish urination by pressing out any final drops three times by passing the left hand beneath the penis. If you are out in the countryside, make sure you are out of view. Hide yourself behind something if you can. Do not expose your private parts until you are about to sit. Do not face the sun or the moon, and do not turn your face or your back to the Qibla. Do not choose a place where people convene. Do not urinate in still water, beneath a fruit-bearing tree, or into a hole. Avoid hard ground, and be careful if the wind is blowing. Be careful not to splash yourself, for the Prophet ﷺ said that this is the most common cause of punishment in the grave.¹ When you squat down, put your weight on the left foot. Do not urinate standing unless you have to. When cleaning yourself, use both stones and water. If you have to choose between them, water is better. If you have only stones, use three clean dry pebbles,

ensuring that when you wipe nothing else is soiled. Likewise, wipe the penis three times with different parts of the stone. If it is not clean after three, then five, seven, or whatever odd number is required. The odd number is only a recommendation, while the thorough cleansing is obligatory. Use only the left hand for this task. After finishing the cleaning, say, "Dear God, purify my heart from hypocrisy, and guard my loins from depravity." Wipe your hand on the ground or on a wall, and then wash it.

The Minor Ritual Ablution (*Wuḍūʾ*)

After finishing with cleaning yourself, do not neglect to use the tooth-stick (*siwāk*), for it "purifies the mouth, pleases the Lord, and frustrates Satan" (Ibn Mājah 289), and "a prayer with clean teeth is better than seventy prayers without."² Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Were it not for the difficulty it would impose upon my Community, I would have ordered them to use the tooth-stick before every prayer." (Bukhārī 887) He ﷺ also said, "I was commanded so emphatically to use the tooth-stick that I feared it would be made an obligation for me."³

Then sit down to perform the ritual ablution, facing the Qibla in an elevated place so that you do not get splashed with water. Say, "In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful. Lord, I seek refuge with You from the promptings of devils, and I seek refuge with You from their approaching me." Then wash your hands three times before placing them into the vessel, and say, "Dear God, I ask You for good fortune and blessing, and I seek refuge with You from misfortune and ruin."

Then make the intention to cleanse yourself from ritual impurity, or to enter a state in which ritual prayer is permitted. You must not neglect to form your intention before you begin washing your face, or else your ablution will not be valid. Then scoop a handful

of water to rinse out your mouth three times. Swish the water all the way to the back of your mouth—unless you are fasting, in which case you should do it gently. Say, “Dear God, help me to recite Your Book and to remember You much, and strengthen me with the steadfast word in the life of this world and the Hereafter.”

Next take another handful and rinse out your nose three times, blowing out all the moisture. Say while drawing in the water, “Dear God, allow me to breathe in the fragrance of Paradise, and be content with me.” While blowing it out, say, “Dear God, I seek refuge with You from the odors of Hell and the evil of that abode.”

Next, take another handful and wash your face from the edge of the brow to the end of the chin lengthwise, and from ear to ear widthwise. Make sure the water reaches the place where the hair is generally trimmed by men or drawn back by women, the spot between the top of the ear and the temple that is part of the forehead. Make sure the water reaches the four spots where hair grows: the eyebrows, the moustache, the eyelashes, and the sideburns, meaning the areas in front of the ears where the beard begins. The water must reach the roots of the hair of the beard if it is thin, but not if it is thick. Say while washing the face, “Dear God, brighten my face with Your light on the Day when the faces of Your saints are brightened; and do not darken my face with Your darkness on the Day when the faces of Your enemies are darkened.” Do not forget to comb your fingers through your beard if it is thick.

Next wash your right hand and arm and then the left, including the elbow and going halfway up the upper arm;ⁱ for the adornments of Paradise will reach all the places that were washed in the ablution. Say while washing the right hand, “Dear God, give me my Book [of deeds] in my right hand, and make my reckoning easy.” When

i As he explains further on, Ghazālī's instructions have in view the merit of going beyond what is necessary, which is to wash the forearms up to and including the elbows and the feet up to and including the ankles.

washing the left say, "Dear God, I seek refuge with You lest I be given my Book in my left hand or from behind my back."

Next wipe over the whole of your head by wetting your hands, pressing the fingertips of your left and right hands together, placing them on the front of the head, and then drawing them back to the nape and then forward again. Do this three times, as for all the other parts. Say, "Dear God, cover me with Your mercy, send down Your blessings upon me; and shade me beneath the shade of Your Throne on the Day when there will be no shade but Yours. Dear God, make my hair and my skin forbidden to Hell-Fire."

Next dampen your hands again, and wipe your ears outside and in. Place your index fingers in your earholes and wipe the outside of the ears with your thumbs, saying, "Dear God, make me one of those who hear the word and follow the best of it. Dear God, let me hear the herald of Paradise in Paradise among the righteous."

Then wipe the back of your neck, saying, "Dear God, spare my neck from Hell. I seek refuge with You from chains and fetters."

Next wash your right foot and then the left, up to and including the ankles. Wash between your toes with the little finger of your left hand, reaching from below, beginning with the little toe of the right foot, and working leftwards to the little toe of the left foot. Say, "Dear God, make my feet firm upon the straight path alongside the feet of Your righteous servants." Say when washing the left, "Dear God, I seek refuge with You lest my foot should slip from the path into Hell on the Day when the feet of the hypocrites and idolaters slip." Bring the water halfway up your shins. Make sure that you repeat all your actions three times.

When you have completed your ablution, look skywards and say, "I bear witness that there is no god but God, One without partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His Servant and Messenger. Glory and praise be to You, dear God. I bear witness that there is no god but You. I have done evil and wronged myself.

I ask Your forgiveness and repent to You, so forgive me and relent to me; truly You are the Oft-Relenting, the Most Merciful. Dear God, make me among those who repent; make me among those who purify themselves; make me among Your righteous servants; make me patient and thankful; make me remember You often, and glorify You morning and evening."

If someone recites all these supplications during the ablution, his sins will exit from every part of his body. A seal will be set upon his ablution, and it will be raised up to beneath the Throne, where it will glorify and hallow God unceasingly. The reward of that ablution will be written for him until the Day of Resurrection.

Seven things must be avoided when performing the ablution. Do not shake your hands so that water splashes everywhere. Do not splash water forcefully against your head and face. Do not speak during the ablution. Do not wash more than three times. Do not allow obsessive misgivings to make you use more water than is needed, for a devil named al-Walhān (the Agitator) plays games with obsessive people. Do not use water that has been sitting in the sun. Do not use metal vessels. These seven things are objectionable in the ritual ablution.

A Tradition states that if someone remembers God during his ablution, God purifies his entire body; but if he does not remember God, nothing is purified but what the water touches.⁴

The Major Ritual Ablution (*Ghusl*)

If you incur major ritual impurity (*janāba*) from a nocturnal emission or sexual intercourse, carry your vessel to the wash-room. First wash your hands three times and clean your body of any impurities, and then perform the ritual ablution for prayer in the manner described above, along with all the supplications. However, leave off washing your feet until the end of the bath so

as not to waste water. Once you have finished the ablution, pour water over your head three times while making the intention to remove the state of major ritual impurity. Then pour it three times over your right side, then your left. Rub your body, front and back, three times. Comb your fingers through the hair of your head and beard. Make sure the water reaches all the folds of the body and the roots of the hair, whether it is thin or thick. Be careful not to touch your penis after performing the ablution. If your hand does touch it, repeat the ablution.

The obligatory elements among all this are as follows: forming the intention, removing the impure matter, and covering the entire body with water.

The obligatory elements of the minor ritual ablution are as follows: washing the face and hands up to and including the elbows, wiping part of the head, and washing the feet up to and including the ankles—all of these at least once, along with forming the intention and doing them in the correct order. All the other things are confirmed (*mu'akkada*) *Sunnas* which confer great merit and a handsome reward. Anyone who neglects them will lose out; indeed, they will jeopardize their obligatory acts, since voluntary acts make good any deficiencies in the obligatory ones.

The Dry Ablution (*Tayammum*)

If may happen that you find yourself unable to use water. Perhaps you may have tried in vain to find it, or illness may prevent you from using it. Perhaps water is present, but something impedes you from reaching it, such as a dangerous animal or imprisonment. Perhaps you have water, but you need it to satisfy your thirst or that of your companion. Perhaps the water belongs to someone else, and he asks an exorbitant price for it. Perhaps you are wounded or ill, and you fear for your life. If any of these be the case, wait

until the obligatory time for prayer arrives, and then look for some good ground with clean, pure, and soft earth upon it. Strike your palms upon the earth with your fingers pressed together, forming the intention to enter a state in which obligatory ritual prayer is permitted. Wipe your hands on your face once; there is no need to ensure that the soil reaches the roots of the hair, whether it be thin or thick. Then remove your ring and strike the earth again, this time with your fingers splayed, and wipe your arms up to and including the elbows. If you do not cover them all, strike the ground again and finish them off. Then wipe one palm with the other, and go between the fingers.

With this dry ablution you may perform a single obligatory ritual prayer, and any number of voluntary prayers you desire. If you wish to perform another obligatory prayer, you must make another dry ablution for it.

Going to the Mosque

Once you have finished your ritual purification, perform the two cycles (*rak'a*) of prayer that precede the dawn prayer in your home, if dawn has already arrived. That is what the Messenger of God ﷺ used to do (Muslim 736). Then set out for the mosque. You should not neglect to pray in congregation, especially the dawn prayer. Congregational prayer is seventeen times better than solitary prayer (Bukhārī 645). If you are happy to forgo such profit, what is the point of seeking knowledge? The fruit of knowledge is putting it into practice.

As you walk to the mosque, walk tranquilly and calmly rather than rushing. Say on the way, "Dear God, by the right of those who ask You, and by the right of those who entreat You, and by the right of this journey of mine towards You, I pledge that I have not set out arrogantly or proudly, nor ostentatiously or pretentiously,

but only to avoid Your wrath and seek Your good pleasure. I ask You to save me from Hell and forgive me my sins; for none can forgive sins but You" (Ibn Mājah 778).

Entering the Mosque

When you enter the mosque, go in with your right foot and say, "Dear God, bless Muḥammad and the Family and Companions of Muḥammad, and give them peace. Dear God, forgive me my sins, and open to me the doors of Your mercy" (Muslim 713).

If you see anyone selling anything in the mosque, say, "May God not make your trade profitable!" If you see anyone asking around for lost property, say, "May God not return your property to you!" That is what the Messenger of God ﷺ commanded (Tirmidhī 1321).

After entering the mosque, do not sit down without first praying the two cycles of greeting the mosque (*taḥiyyat al-masjid*). If you are not in ritual purity or you do not wish to perform it, then it is enough to recite the "enduring words of righteousness" (*al-bāqiyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*)ⁱ three times, or some say four; or some say thrice if one is not in ritual purity, and once if one has performed the ablution. If you did not pray the two cycles that precede the dawn prayer at home, then praying them now will stand for greeting the mosque, too.

Once you finish the two cycles, make the intention to engage in a spiritual retreat (*i'tikāf*), and recite the supplication which the Messenger of God ﷺ used to recite after the two cycles before the dawn prayer: "Dear God, I ask You for mercy from Yourself to guide my heart, to hold me together, to set right my affairs, to restore my composure, to rectify my religion, to protect me in

i The exact phrases designated by this term vary in the Traditions. One well-known hadith gives them as "Glory be to God, and praise be to God, and there is no god but God, and God is Greatest" (Nasā'ī, *Kubrā* 10617).

private and give me dignity in public, to make my actions pure, to brighten my face, to inspire me with rectitude, to fulfill my needs, and to guard me from evil.

"Dear God, I ask You for sincere faith that saturates my heart, for true sincerity so that I know that nothing can befall me but what You have destined for me, and for contentment in what You have apportioned to me.

"Dear God, I ask You for true faith and certainty after which there can be no unbelief. I ask You for mercy by means of which I may attain the honor of munificence from You in this life and the Next.

"Dear God, I ask You for patience with destiny, triumph at the final Meeting, the mansions of the martyrs, the life of the felicitous, victory over enemies, and the company of the Prophets.

"Dear God, I set my needs before You. My vision is weak, my deeds are scant, and I am in need of Your mercy. I ask You, Judge of all affairs, Healer of hearts: as You rescue from the midst of the sea, rescue me from the torment of Hell, from the herald of ruin, and from the ordeal of the grave.

"Dear God, wherever my vision has proven short, my deeds weak, and my intention and hope lacking for any good that You have promised any of Your servants, or any good that You have given any of Your creatures, I entreat You for it and ask it of You, O Lord of the Worlds!

"Dear God, guide us and make us guides for others, and do not make us stray or lead others astray. Make us war for Your enemies, and peace for Your allies. Make us love other people by Your love, and make us enemies, by Your enmity, of those of Your creation who defy You. Dear God, this is my supplication, and it is for You to answer it. This is my effort, and upon You I rely. Truly we belong to God, and truly to Him we shall return. There is no strength or power save with God, the Sublime, the Magnificent.

"Dear God, Lord of the firm bond and the wise command, I ask You for security on the Day of Warning, and Paradise on the Day of Eternity alongside those who are brought near to witness, those who bow and prostrate, those who fulfill their pacts with You. Truly You are Most Merciful and Loving, and You do as You wish. Glory be to Him Who possesses might, and wields it. Glory be to Him Who is clothed and adorned in magnificence. Glory be to Him, other than whom none merits glorification. Glory be to the Lord of bounty and favors. Glory be to the Lord of liberality and munificence. Glory be to Him Whose knowledge encompasses all things.

"Dear God, make for me light in my heart, and light in my grave, and light in my hearing, and light in my sight, and light in my hair, and light in my skin, and light in my flesh, and light in my blood, and light in my bones, and light before me, and light behind me, and light to my right, and light to my left, and light above me, and light below me. Dear God, increase me in light, and give me light, and magnify my light, and make for me light—by Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful!" (Tirmidhī 3419).

After finishing this supplication, do not occupy the rest of the time until the prayer begins with anything other than contemplation, invocation, or reciting the Qur'ān. When you hear the call to prayer, stop whatever you are doing and give the responses to the muezzin. When he calls, "God is Greatest," repeat it, and the same for all the other phrases except for "Come to prayer" and "Come to felicity," which you should answer with, "There is no strength or power save with God, the Sublime, the Almighty." When he says [in the call for the dawn prayer], "Prayer is better than sleep," reply, "You have spoken truly and well, and to that I bear witness."

When you hear the *iqāma*, say the same, except that when the caller says, "Prayer will now be held," say, "May God hold it and perpetuate it, as long as heaven and earth endure."

Once you have finished responding to the muezzin, say, "Dear God, I ask You as Your prayer arrives, Your heralds cry, Your night retreats, and Your day advances, to grant Muḥammad mediation, merit, and exalted degree, and to raise him to the glorious station that You promised him.¹ Truly You do not break promises, O Most Merciful of the merciful!"²

If you hear the call to prayer while you are in the middle of a ritual prayer, wait until you have completed your prayer and then say the responses in the usual manner.

Once the imam begins the obligatory prayer, do not do anything but follow him in it, as will be explained in the section on the proper method of prayer. Afterwards say, "Dear God, bless Muḥammad and the Family of Muḥammad, and give them peace. Dear Lord, You are Peace, and from You is peace, and to You peace returns. Greet us with peace, Lord, and admit us into Paradise, the Abode of Peace. Blessed and Sublime You are, Lord of Majesty and Bounty!³ Glory be to My Lord, the Sublime, the Oft-Giving. There is no god but God, alone without partner. His is the kingdom, and His is the praise; He gives life and deals death, and He is alive and will never die. All goodness is in His Hand, and He has power over all things.⁴ There is no god but God, the Lord of favor, bounty, and excellent praise. There is no god but God, and we worship none but Him, sincere to Him in faith, though the unbelievers may detest it."

After that, recite the perfect and comprehensive prayer (*al-jawāmiʿ al-kawāmil*), which the Messenger of God ﷺ taught to 'Ā'isha ra, and which is as follows: "Dear God, I ask You for all that is good, both now and in the future, whether I know of it or not. I

i Observe prayer from the sun's decline until the dark of night and the dawn recital. Truly dawn recital is ever witnessed. And for part of the night keep vigil as a free devotion from you. Perhaps your Lord will raise you to a glorious station (Qur'ān 17:79-80).

seek refuge with You from all that is evil, both now and in the future, whether I know of it or not. I ask You for Paradise and every word, deed, intention, and belief that leads to it, and I seek refuge with You from Hell and every word, deed, intention, and belief that leads to it. I ask You for whatever good Your servant and messenger Muḥammad ﷺ asked for, and I seek refuge with You from whatever evil Your Servant and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ sought refuge from. Dear God, whatever You have decreed for me, make it end in guidance" (Ibn Mājah 3846).

Then recite the supplication which the Messenger of God ﷺ taught to Fāṭima ؓ: "O Ever-Living, O Ever-Sustaining, O Lord of Majesty and Honor! There is no god but You. I seek relief in Your mercy, and refuge from Your punishment. Do not leave me to my own devices, nor to any of Your creatures, for the blink of an eye. Rectify all my affairs for me, as You do for Your righteous servants."⁸

Next, recite the supplication of Jesus, blessings and peace be upon him and our Prophet: "Dear God, I am unable today to defend myself from what I dislike, or to bring myself benefit I may hope for. All destiny today is in Your Hand, not in the hand of any other. Today I am hostage to my own deeds. There is no one more poverty-stricken than me, no one more wealthy than You. Dear God, do not give my enemy satisfaction over me, nor give my friend cause to be disappointed in me. Do not let me suffer in my religion. Do not make this world the chief of my concerns, nor the sum total of my knowledge. Do not leave me, for my sins, at the mercy of one who will show me no mercy."⁹

Then recite any well-known supplication that occurs to you. You should memorize some of those I have quoted in the Book of Supplications in *The Revival of Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*).

From after the dawn prayer until sunrise, your time should

be divided between four things: supplication and formulae of glorification; invocations counted on a rosary; recitation of the Qur'ān; and meditation. Meditate upon your sins and errors, your shortcomings in worshipping your Lord, and how you have put yourself at risk of incurring His dire punishment and terrible wrath. Organize your regular acts of worship for the day, so that you can make up for any shortcomings and avoid incurring God's painful wrath throughout the day. Intend the best for all your fellow Muslims, and resolve that you will not do anything all day that is not in obedience to God Most High. Consider in your heart the acts of obedience that are within your power, select the best of them, and consider how you are to go about achieving them. Do not neglect to contemplate how short life is and how death, the destroyer of hopes, is always approaching. When it arrives, you will no longer have the choice, and there will be nothing left to do but sigh in lament over your delusions.

Your invocations should include the following ten phrases: (1) "There is no god but God, alone without partner. His is the kingdom, and His is all praise; He gives life and deals death, and He is alive and will never die. All goodness is in His Hand, and He has power over all things" (Tirmidhī 3470). (2) "There is no god but God, the True Manifest Sovereign."¹⁰ (3) "There is no god but God, the One, the Subjugator, Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, the Almighty, the All-Forgiving."¹¹ (4) "Glory be to God, and praise be to God, and there is no god but God, and God is Greatest, and there is no strength or power save with God, the Sublime, the Magnificent."¹² (5) "All-Glorious, Holy, Lord of the Angels and the Spirit" (Muslim 487). (6) "Glory and praise be to God; glory be to God the Magnificent" (Bukhārī 6043). (7) I ask forgiveness of God the Magnificent, besides Whom there is no god, the Living, the Sustaining, and I ask Him for repentance and forgiveness."¹³ (8) "Dear God, there is no withholding what

You give, and there is no giving what You withhold, and there is no repelling what You decree, and fortune does not avail the fortunate against You" (Bukhārī 844). (9) "Dear God, bless Muḥammad and the Family and Companions of Muḥammad, and grant them peace." (10) "In the Name of God, against Whose Name nothing can cause harm on earth or in heaven; and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" (Tirmidhī 3385).

Repeat each one of these phrases a hundred times, or seventy, or at least ten so that the total is one hundred. Do these litanies consistently. Do not engage in conversation until before the sun rises. A report says that this—engaging in invocation until the sun rises without interrupting it with conversation—is better than freeing eight slaves from among the descendants of Ishmael ﷺ.¹⁴

Between Sunrise and Noon

After the sun has risen a spear's height above the horizon, pray two cycles, because that is the end of the time when ritual prayer is discouraged: from after the obligatory dawn prayer until the sun is up. Once the day is bright and almost a quarter of the way through, pray the midmorning (*duḥā*) prayer. This may be four, six, or eight cycles in pairs, since all these numbers were related from the Messenger of God ﷺ. "Prayer is entirely good; he who desires much of it may have it, and he who desires a little may have it."¹⁵ There is no regular ritual prayer between sunrise and noon except for this one. You may devote the rest of the time to any of four things.

(1) The first, and the best, is the pursuit of knowledge that is beneficial, as opposed to the idle curiosity in which some people engage, calling it "knowledge." Beneficial knowledge means that which deepens your fear of God Most High, gives you greater insight into your own faults, and adds to your knowledge of how

to worship your Lord. It decreases your desire for the world, and increases your desire for the Hereafter. It opens your eyes to the flaws in your actions so that you may put them right. It makes you aware of the plots and delusions of Satan, and how he deceives evil scholars and exposes them to the wrath and ire of God Most High, so that they trade away their religion for the world and use knowledge as a means of gaining wealth from the state, usurping funds meant for endowments, orphans, and the needy. All the day through, he directs their aspirations toward seeking renown and status in people's hearts, which induces them to engage in ostentation, squabbling, and prideful debate with one another.

I have described the beneficial type of knowledge comprehensively in my book *The Revival of Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*). If you aspire to it, obtain the book and act upon it, and then teach it and call others to it. Those who learn it and act upon it, and then call others to it, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus ﷺ attested.ⁱ

If, once you have finished all this and are done with rectifying yourself outwardly and inwardly, you still have some free time, there is no harm in studying the jurisprudence of your school of law, so as to become acquainted with the more uncommon aspects of worship and the way to mediate between people when their passions cause disputes to break out among them. Once those essential things have been achieved, this is also one of the communal obligations. But if your soul should tempt you to abandon the litanies and invocations we have just described in order to engage in it, know that Satan the accursed has secreted in your heart a deadly

i *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* (New Testament, Matthew 5:19).

disease: love for wealth and renown. Beware of letting him dupe you, for he will only laugh in mockery as he sees you destroyed.

If you test yourself for a while with these litanies and invocations and find that you do not find them difficult to keep up or begin to become lax with them, but rather your desire for attaining beneficial knowledge becomes manifest, your only goal being to seek the Face of God Most High and the Hereafter, then to engage in this pursuit is better than many voluntary acts of worship, provided than your intention is sound. It all comes down to the intention: if it is not sound, that is how the ignorant become deluded and men's feet slip.

(2) A second way to spend this time is that if you are unable to seek beneficial knowledge you should engage in voluntary worship such as invocation, recitation, and prayer. This is the rank of the devout worshippers, the way of the righteous. If you follow it, you will also be numbered among the supremely successful.

(3) A third way is to engage in activities that benefit your fellow Muslims and bring happiness to the hearts of the faithful, or to assist the righteous in their works. This includes serving jurists, Sufis, and religious leaders, and running errands for them, feeding the poor and needy, visiting the sick, and attending funerals. All of these are better than voluntary acts of worship, for they are both worship of God and benevolence toward the Muslims.

(4) A fourth way is that if you are unable to do that, you see to your personal needs by earning a living for yourself or your family, so that the Muslims will have no cause to fear harm from you, whether by word or deed, and your religion likewise will be safe as long as you do not commit sin. In this way you will attain the

rank of the Companions of the Right,ⁱ even if you do not manage to ascend to the levels of the Foremost.ⁱⁱ That is the lowest station within the religion. Anything below it belongs to the depths of the devils, which are reached—God forbid!—by engaging in things that destroy your religion or harm any of God's servants. That is the level of the ruined ones, so beware of joining them.

Thus a person may occupy one of three levels with respect to his religion: safety, profit, or loss. Safety is for one who does no more than what he is obliged to do, and refrains from sin. Profit is for one who volunteers additional worship and devotion. Loss is for one who falls short of meeting his obligations. If you cannot manage to be in profit, at least do your best to be safe. Above all, you must beware of incurring loss.

As regards his position relative to other people, a person may occupy one of three ranks. The first is that among them he is like the *noble, pious* (Qur'ān 80:16) angels, hastening to assist them with compassion and to gladden their hearts. The second is that among them he is like a dumb animal or an inanimate object, such that he does them no good but also does them no evil. The third is that among them he is like a dangerous beast such as a scorpion or snake, from which no good can be expected but only evil.

If you cannot aspire to the heights of the angels, you must at least keep yourself from sinking below the level of domesticated beasts and inanimate objects to the level of dangerous beasts. If you are content to be below the highest point of 'Illiyūn (Qur'ān

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- i *And the Companions of the Right—what of the Companions of the Right? Amid thornless lote trees, and clustered plantains, and extended shade, and gushing water, and abundant fruit, unfailing, unforbidden, and raised couches. We brought them into being especially, and made them virgins, loving, of equal age, for the Companions of the Right: many of those of old, and many of the later folk* (Qur'ān 56:27–40).
 - ii *The Companions of the Right—what of the Companions of the Right? And the Companions of the Left—what of the Companions of the Left? And the Foremost are the Foremost: those are the ones brought nigh* (Qur'ān 56:8–10).

83:18-21) [in Paradise], at the very least do not fall to "the lowest of the low" (Qur'ān 95:5). Perhaps you can achieve an even level, one that is neither for or against you.

So throughout your day you must engage only in things that benefit your Hereafter, or the livelihood that you cannot do without for the sake of preparing for your Hereafter. If you cannot manage to fulfill the rights of your religion and keep yourself safe while associating with other people, then solitude is better for you, so adhere to it for the sake of salvation and safety. If in solitude you find yourself tempted toward things displeasing to God Most High, and you cannot allay those temptations by engaging in worship, you should sleep. [In those circumstances] that is the best state, for you and for us; if we cannot claim the spoils of battle, we must be content to escape with our lives. How wretched, though, is the state of him who can only preserve his religion by putting his life on hold! For "sleep is the brother of death," wherein life is suspended and one joins the ranks of inanimate objects.

Preparing for the Other Ritual Prayers

You should prepare for the noon prayer before noon arrives. Take your siesta first if you spent the night in prayer or stayed up late for some meritorious purpose. A siesta helps with praying at night, just as eating a pre-dawn meal helps with fasting. Conversely, taking a siesta without praying at night is like eating a pre-dawn meal without fasting the next day. If you do take a siesta, try to wake up before midday. Perform ablutions, go to the mosque, and perform the greeting prayer. When the muezzin calls for the prayer, give the responses, then stand and pray four cycles directly after noon passes. The Messenger of God ﷺ used to make these cycles long, saying, "This is a time when the gates of Paradise are open, and so I like to have a righteous deed lifted up for me then" (Tirmidhi

478). These four cycles before the midday prayer are confirmed *sunnas*. A Tradition states that whoever prays them and does the bowing and prostrating well will be joined in the prayer by seventy thousand angels, who will ask forgiveness for him until the night.ⁱ Then perform the obligatory prayer with the imam, and another two cycles of voluntary prayer afterwards, since these are among the established regular voluntary prayers (*rawātib*).

From then until the afternoon prayer, engage in study, assisting your fellow Muslims, reciting the Qur'ān, or pursuing your livelihood to aid you in your religion. Then pray four cycles before the afternoon prayer, since these are also confirmed *sunnas*. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "May God have mercy on anyone who prays four cycles before the afternoon prayer" (Tirmidhī 430), so strive to ensure that his supplication includes you.

After the afternoon prayer, engage in the same activities as you did before it. Do not let your time pass by aimlessly, doing whatever you happen to do. You must hold yourself to account and organize your regular litanies and activities throughout the night and daytime, assigning a given activity to each moment and then sticking to it without substitution. If you do so, every moment will become palpably blessed.

But if you let yourself grow idle like a beast of the field, not knowing what you will do at any given moment, most of your time will be squandered. Yet your time is nothing other than your life, and your life is your capital, the basis for all your commerce, the means by which you may reach the bliss of the Abode of Eternal Life in the Presence of God Most High. Every breath you take is a priceless jewel that cannot be replaced. Once it is gone, it will never return. Do not be like those deluded fools who rejoice each

i 'Irāqī notes in his study of the narrations in *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* that he could not find a source for this hadith.

day as their wealth grows while their life shrinks. What good is there in wealth that grows and life that shrinks? Rejoice only in increased knowledge or righteous work, for they will be your companions in the grave when all your family, wealth, children, and friends have been left behind.

When the sun yellows on the horizon, try to return to the mosque before it sets, and engage in glorification and petitions for forgiveness. The merit of this time equals that of the time before sunrise, as God Most High says: *Glorify your Lord with praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting* (Qur'ān 20:130). Before sunset, recite al-Shams (Qur'ān 91), al-Layl (Qur'ān 92), al-Falaq (Qur'ān 113), and al-Nās (Qur'ān 114). Make it so that when the sun sets, you are asking God's forgiveness. When you hear the azan,ⁱ give the responses and then say afterwards, "Dear God, I ask You as Your night retreats, and Your day advances, and Your prayer arrives, and Your heralds cry, to grant Muḥammad mediation..." and so on as above. After responding to the *iqāma* also, pray the obligatory prayer and then two cycles afterwards before speaking, those being the regular voluntary cycles attached to the sunset prayer. It is also *sunna* to perform four cycles afterwards, and to make them long. If you are able to form the intention to remain in vigil in the mosque until the evening prayer, filling the time in between with voluntary prayers, then do so. Countless narrations speak to the merit of this. This is the *rise of night* (Qur'ān 73:6) (*nāshi'at al-layl*), because it is the beginning (*nash'a*) of it. It is also known as "the prayer of the penitent." The Messenger of God ﷺ was asked about God's Words, *Their sides shrink from their beds* (Qur'ān 32:16), and replied, "It means prayer between the

i The call to prayer (in Arabic, *adhān*), traditionally made aloud from every mosque by its muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*).

two evening prayers;ⁱ it wipes away the idle words of the day's beginning, and purifies its end."

Once the time for the evening prayer arrives, pray four cycles before the obligatory prayer by way of filling the space between the two calls to prayer. This is highly meritorious. A Tradition states that supplication between the *azan* and the *iqāma* is never rejected.¹⁶ Then perform the obligatory prayer and the two regular voluntary cycles after it. In these two cycles, recite al-Sajda (Qur'ān 32) and al-Mulk (Qur'ān 67), or Yā-Sīn (Qur'ān 36) and al-Dukhān (Qur'ān 44), as is related from the Messenger of God ﷺ. Then pray four cycles afterwards, since there are reports that affirm the great merit of doing so. Then perform the *witr* prayer, which contains three cycles: two and then one in separate prayers, or three together in a single prayer. The Messenger of God ﷺ used to recite al-A'lā (Qur'ān 87), al-Kāfirūn (Qur'ān 109), al-Ikhlās (Qur'ān 112), al-Falaq (Qur'ān 113), and al-Nās (Qur'ān 114) in the *witr* (Abū Dāwūd 1424).

If you intend to perform the night prayer, delay the *witr* until after it, so that it is your last prayer of that night. Then revise your studies, or read a book. Do not engage in idle talk or frivolity, lest that be the last thing you do before sleeping; for "Actions are judged by their conclusions" (Ibn Mājah 4199).

Going to Sleep

When you are about to go to sleep, lay out your bed so that you face the Qibla sleeping on your right side, like a corpse in the grave. For sleep is like death, and waking is like the Resurrection. Perhaps God Most High will take your spirit in the night, so be ready to meet Him. Be in ritual purity when you sleep. Keep your

i i.e. the sunset and evening prayers.

written will beneath your pillow. Sleep after repenting of all sins and asking forgiveness, and resolving never to return to sin again. Pledge that if God Most High revives you, you will do good to all Muslims. Remember that you will lie down in the grave too, entirely alone, having nothing with you but your deeds, rewarded only for your own efforts. Do not try to induce sleep deliberately by using soft bedding, for sleep is the suspension of life—unless you are prone to doing evil when you are awake, in which case sleep is a way to protect your religion.

There are twenty-four hours in a night and day. Do not sleep for more than eight of those hours. If you lived for sixty years, you would not want to waste more than twenty of them, a whole third of your life.

When you go to sleep, ready your tooth-stick and ablution water for when you wake up. Resolve to get up to pray in the night, or at least before dawn. Two cycles of prayer in the dead of night are among the treasures of righteousness, so gain as many treasures as you can before the day when poverty befalls you. The treasures of this world will be of no use to you when you die.

Say before you sleep: "In Your Name, Lord, I lay down my side, and in Your Name I raise it. Forgive me my sin. Dear God, save me from Your punishment on the Day You raise Your servants" (Tirmidhi 3398).

"Dear God, in Your Name I live and die. I seek refuge with You, Dear God, from the evil of every evil one, and from the evil of every beast You hold by the forelock. *Truly my Lord is upon a straight path* (Qur'ān 11:56). Dear God, You are the First, and there is nothing before You; You are the Last, and there is nothing after You; You are the Manifest, and there is nothing above You; You are the Hidden, and there is nothing below You. Settle my debts and spare me from poverty" (Muslim 2713).

"Dear God, You created my soul and You will take it back; its death and its life are Yours. Dear God, if You cause it to die, forgive it; and if You restore it to life, protect it as You protect Your righteous servants. Dear God, I ask You for pardon and wellbeing in this world and the Hereafter" (Muslim 2712).

"Dear God, cause me to wake in the hour most beloved to You, and put me to work in the act most beloved to You, which draws me ever nearer to You and ever further from Your displeasure, so that when I ask of You You give me, and when I pray for Your forgiveness You forgive me, and when I call upon You You answer me."¹⁷

Then recite Āyat al-Kursī (Qur'ān 2:255) and the end of al-Baqara beginning at *The Messenger believes...* (Qur'ān 2:285–286), then al-Ikhlāṣ (Qur'ān 112), al-Falaq (Qur'ān 113), al-Nās (Qur'ān 114), and al-Mulk (Qur'ān 67).

Ensure that when sleep comes you are engaged in the remembrance of God and ritually pure. The spirit of anyone who does this is raised to the Throne, and he is counted as being in prayer until he wakes up.

When you wake up, repeat the routine that I described earlier. Keep to this routine for the rest of your days. If you find it difficult to be consistent, you must be as steadfast as a sick man who has to take bitter medicine in order to be cured. Contemplate how short life is; even if you lived to be a hundred, that would still be nothing compared to how long you will live in the Hereafter, which is forever and eternally. Consider the fact that you would be able to bear hardship and degradation in the pursuit of worldly advantage for a month or a year, in the hope that afterwards you would be able to rest for twenty years. Why, then, should you not be able to bear this for a few short days in the hope of eternal repose?

Do not be so optimistic that you make yourself indolent. Bear in mind how close death is, and tell yourself, "I will bear the hardship

today, for perhaps I will die tonight. I will bear it tonight, for perhaps I will die tomorrow." Death does not pounce at any special time, in any special situation, or in any special year; but pounce it must. Preparing for death is more important than preparing for this world, once you realize that you will not stay here for long. It may be that you have no more than a day left, or a single breath. Keep this thought in your heart every day, and force yourself to bear patiently with obedience to God Most High, day by day. If you suppose that you have fifty years left and then try to force yourself to be steadfast in obedience to God, your soul will rebel and make it difficult for you. If you do as I say, when death comes you will rejoice forever. If you procrastinate and dawdle, death will come when you least expect it and you will mourn forever. "When morning comes, travelers are glad they set out by night."ⁱ When death comes, the truth of the matter will become clear to you: *And you will come to know the truth of it in due course* (Qur'ān 38:88).

Now that we have shown you how to organize your daily activities, let us describe the method of ritual prayer and fasting, and the rules and proper conduct of prayer both alone and in congregation, as well as the Friday prayer.

Ritual Prayerⁱⁱ

First you must purify yourself both ritually and physically—your body, your clothing, and the place where you will pray—and cover your body from navel to knee. Stand up straight facing the Qibla

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- i A proverb said to have been coined, or quoted, by the brilliant military commander Khālīd ibn al-Walīd (d. 21/642) after a campaign in Iraq during the caliphate of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.
 - ii Note that in this section, Imām Ghazālī describes the prayer according to his own legal school (*madhhab*). In some aspects of the prayer there are differences of detail, depending on which school the worshipper follows.

with your feet apart, not pressed together. Recite al-Nās (Qurʾān 114) as a protection against Satan the accursed.

Focus your heart upon what you are doing, and empty it of any obsessive misgivings. Consider the One before Whom you are standing, and Whom you are addressing. Be too ashamed to address your Lord with a heedless heart and a breast filled with worldly misgivings and base passions. Know that He is aware of what is on your mind and He can see your heart. God will only accept your prayer to the extent that you are humble, reverent, meek, and earnest. Worship Him when you pray “as if you could see Him; for if you see Him not, He sees you” (Muslim 8).

If you find it difficult to achieve presence of heart and stillness of body because you are lacking in awareness of the majesty of God Most High, imagine that a righteous man from among the eminent members of your family is watching you to see how you pray. This will make your heart present and your body still. Then turn back to your soul and say, “Evil soul! Are you not ashamed before your Lord and Creator? When you imagined that a lowly servant of His was watching you, though he has no power to harm or benefit you, you became reverent and prayed well. But then you know full well that He is watching you, yet you do not show reverence for His magnificence! Do you hold Him lower than His own servant? How wicked and ignorant you are! You are your own worst enemy!”

Use such methods to treat your heart, and it may be that it will come to be present with you when you pray. Your prayer does not count unless you have presence of mind in it. If you are inattentive or heedless during any part of it, it is closer to a sin than a good deed, and you ought to seek forgiveness and expiation for it.

Once your heart is present, do not neglect to call the *iqāma* for the prayer even if you are praying alone. If you expect others to pray with you, call the *azan* and then the *iqāma*. Afterwards,

formulate the intention for prayer and say in your heart, "I will fulfil the obligation of the midday prayer for God Most High." Keep this thought in your heart as you say the introductory *takbīr*, and do not drop the thought until after you have said it.

At the *takbīr*, raise your hands from hanging loose up to shoulder level, with the palms flat and fingers extended. Do not make any particular effort to ensure that the fingers are pressed together or held apart. The thumbs should be level with the earlobes, the fingertips with the tops of the ears, and the palms with the shoulders. When they are in place, say the *takbīr*, then gently lower them. Do not push your hands forwards when raising or lowering them, nor backwards when raising them. Do not move them left or right. After lowering them, raise them again to your chest and honor the right one by placing it over the left. Place the fingers of the right hand along the left forearm, and grasp the wrist with them.

Say after the *takbīr*, "God is truly Greatest, and praise be to God abundantly, and glory be to Him morning and evening." Then recite, "I have turned my face to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, as a person of pure faith and a Muslim, and I am not one of the idolaters. Truly my prayer and my rituals, and my living and my dying, are for God, the Lord of the Worlds. No partner has He. Thus am I commanded, and I am one of the Muslims." Then say, "I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed."

Then recite the *Fātiḥa* (Qur'ān 1), ensuring that you pronounce the doubled letters correctly. Try to make clear the distinction between the letters *Dād* and *Zā'* when reciting the Qur'ān in prayer. Say "Amen" after, but not so that it is continuous with the last words of the *Fātiḥa*. Recite aloud in the dawn, sunset, and evening prayers—that is to say, in the first two cycles of them—unless you are praying behind an imam. Say "Amen" out loud.

After the Fātiḥa, in the dawn prayer choose from among the longer *Mufaṣṣal* chapters of the Qur'ān to recite.ⁱ In the sunset prayer, choose from among the shorter ones. In the noon, afternoon, and evening prayers, choose from among the medium ones such as al-Burūj (Qur'ān 85) and those near it. When traveling, recite in the dawn prayer al-Kāfirūn (Qur'ān 109) and al-Ikhlāṣ (Qur'ān 112). Do not pronounce the *takbīr* before bowing together with the final words of the chapter you recite, but instead pause between them for long enough to say, "Glory be to God."

While standing, always keep your eyes lowered to the place where you will prostrate. This will help you to maintain concentration and presence of heart. Be very careful not to glance to the left or the right while praying.

Then say the *takbīr* for bowing and raise your hands in the way described above. Prolong the pronunciation of the *takbīr* until you are fully bowed. Place your hands upon your knees with the fingers straight and the knees unbent. Straighten your back and neck so that they are in line. Keep your elbows away from your sides; this does not apply to women, who should keep them to the sides. Say, "Glory be to my Lord, the Magnificent" three times. If you are praying alone, to say it up to seven or ten times is good.

Then raise your head until you are standing straight and raise your hands, saying, "God hears those who praise Him." Once you are stood up straight, say, "Our Lord, praise be to You—the fill of the heavens, and the fill of the earth, and the fill of whatever else You will." If you are praying the obligatory dawn prayer, recite the *qunūt* supplication in the second cycle after standing up straight from the bow.

i The *Mufaṣṣal* (divided) chapters are generally held to begin with Qur'ān 49 and continue until the end of the Qur'ān.

Then prostrate while saying a *takbîr*, without raising your hands. Place your knees on the ground first, then your hands, then your uncovered forehead. Place your nose on the ground at the same time as your forehead. Keep your elbows away from your sides and your stomach from your thighs; but this does not apply to women. Place your hands on the ground level with your shoulders. Do not lay your forearms upon the ground. Say, "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High" three times, or seven or ten if you are praying alone.

Then lift your head from the prostration, saying a *takbîr*, until you are sitting up straight. Sit upon your left foot and plant your right foot upright. Place your hands on your thighs with the fingers straight. Say, "Lord, forgive me, have mercy on me, provide for me, guide me, mend me, give me health, and pardon me." Then prostrate again in the same manner, then sit up straight for a brief pause in each cycle in which you do not say the *tashahhud*.ⁱ

Then stand up, placing your hands on the floor. When rising, do not step forward with either foot. Begin saying the *takbîr* for rising when you are almost upright in the seated pause, and extend it until you are halfway to standing. The seated pause should be brief, no more than a passing moment.

Perform the second cycle of the prayer in the same manner as the first, beginning from "I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed." After the second cycle, sit for the first *tashahhud* supplication, placing your right hand on the right thigh making a fist but with the thumb and index finger left loose. When you say "there is no god but God," point with the right index finger upon saying the words "but God," not before. Place the left hand on the left thigh with the fingers extended. Sit on your left foot in this *tashahhud* as you did between prostrations. In the final

i A formula of greeting the Prophet ﷺ, testifying that there is no God but Allah and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His Messenger, and invoking on him and his family divine blessings like those accorded to Abraham and his.

tashabbud sit in the *tawarruk* position, sitting on the left buttock with the left foot under you and protruding on the right side, and the right foot planted upright.

After reciting the blessing upon the Prophet ﷺ, finish by reciting the well-known traditional supplications. After finishing them say, "Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God" twice, one on each side, turning your face enough for the hairless part of your cheek to be visible from either side. Make the intention to exit from prayer, and to invoke peace upon the angels and Muslims at your sides. That is how to pray when one is alone.

The principal pillar of ritual prayer is to have reverence and presence of heart, as well as recitation and invocation with the tongue. Ḥasan al-Baṣrīⁱ said, may God have mercy on him, "Every prayer in which the heart is not present is more likely to bring punishment than reward."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "It may be that a person performs a prayer of which not one-sixth or one-tenth is counted for him."ⁱⁱ Only that part of the prayer in which one's mind is present is counted.

Leading and Following in the Ritual Prayerⁱⁱⁱ

The imam must keep the prayer brief. Anasⁱⁱⁱ ﷺ said, "I never followed anyone in a prayer more brief yet more perfect than that of the Messenger of God ﷺ" (Bukhārī 708). He should not say the initiatory *takbīr* until the muezzin has finished calling the *iqāma*, or before the rows have been made straight. The imam should raise

i A highly influential early Sufi ascetic and sage (d. 110/728).

ii Note that in this section, Imam Ghazālī describes the prayer according to his own legal school (*madhhab*). In some aspects of the prayer there are differences of detail, depending on which school the worshipper follows.

iii A Companion of the Prophet ﷺ (d. 93/712).

his voice when calling the *takbirs*, while anyone praying behind him should say them only loud enough to hear himself.ⁱ

The imam should make the specific intention to lead the prayer in order to gain the merit of doing so; but if he fails to, the congregation's prayer is still valid provided that they have made the intention to follow him in the prayer, which also earns them the merit of following the imam.

The imam should say the opening supplications and *ta'awwudh*ⁱⁱ quietly, just as when praying alone, but recite the Fātiḥa and other chapter(s) aloud in both cycles of the dawn prayer and the first two cycles of the sunset and evening prayers. He should also say "Amen" aloud at those times, as should the congregation, who should say it together with the imam, not after him.

The imam should be silent for a moment after the Fātiḥa, to get his breath back. The congregation should take the opportunity to recite the Fātiḥa for themselves during this pause in those prayers which are said aloud, so that they can listen to the imam's recitation first. The congregant should not recite a chapter after the Fātiḥa in the prayers said aloud, unless he cannot hear the imam's voice.

The imam should not say the glorifications in the bows and prostrations more than three times. In the first *tashahhud*, he should stop after "Dear God, bless Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad." In the final two cycles, he should recite only the Fātiḥa. He should not make the prayer overly long for the congregation. In the final *tashahhud*, his supplication should be as long as his *tashahhud* and invocation of blessings on the Prophet ﷺ, and no longer.

i Exceptionally, if there is a very large congregation, not all of whom may be able to hear the *takbirs* from the imam, one or more men may say them loud enough to enable all to follow his movements in unison.

ii Seeking refuge with God from Satan.

When saying the *salām*, the imam should make the intention to invoke peace upon the congregation, and the congregation should make the intention to reply in kind. After the *salām*, the imam should wait a while and then turn to face the congregation. If there are women behind him, he should not turn until they have left. None of the congregation should get up until the imam does. The imam may depart in either direction he pleases, left or right, but right is better.

In the *qunūt* supplication in the dawn prayer, the imam should recite the supplication in the first person plural rather than the singular, saying, "Dear God, guide us..." and so on. He should say it aloud, the congregation saying "Amen." They should not raise their hands for the supplication, since there is no support for this in the tradition. The congregant recites the remainder of the *qunūt* himself from the words, "Truly You judge, but are not judged."

A congregant should not stand by himself in the back row, but should either enter the row in front or else pull someone back from it to join him. The congregant must not go ahead of the imam in any act of the prayer, or synchronize with him, but must always follow after him. He must not bend to bow until the imam is fully bowed. He must not go down into prostration until the imam's forehead is on the ground.

Friday

Friday is the feast day of the believers, a blessed day for which God, Mighty and Majestic, has singled out this Community. It contains an unknown moment during which any Muslim who asks something of God Most High will receive it.

Prepare for it on Thursday by washing your clothes and engaging in much glorification and prayer for forgiveness on Thursday evening; for this time is just as meritorious as that above-mentioned

moment on Friday. One may make the intention to fast on Friday, but only together with Thursday and Saturday, since there is a prohibition against fasting on Friday alone (Muslim 1144).

When dawn arrives, perform the major ritual ablution, for "Bathing on Friday is a duty for every adult" (Bukhārī 879), which here means "highly recommended." Then put on white clothes, for that is the clothing dearest to God Most High. Use the best perfume you have. Make yourself especially clean by shaving and trimming body hair, trimming your nails, cleaning your teeth, and with all other forms of cleanliness and scent.

Go to the mosque early, walking calmly and tranquilly. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "When someone sets out for the Friday prayer in the first hour, it is as though he has sacrificed a camel. When someone sets out in the second hour, it is as though he has sacrificed a cow. When someone goes in the third hour, it is as though he has sacrificed a horned ram. When someone goes in the fourth hour, it is as though he has sacrificed a chicken. When someone goes in the fifth hour, it is as though he has sacrificed an egg. Then when the imam comes out, the scrolls are rolled up and the pens lifted, and the angels gather by the pulpit to listen to the reminder" (Bukhārī 881). It is said that when people look upon the Face of God Most High, they will be as close to Him as they were early to the Friday prayer.

When you enter the mosque, try to get to the front row; but if people are already there, do not step over their necks to do so. Do not walk in front of them if they are praying either. Sit near a wall or pillar, so that no one else walks in front of you. Do not sit down without first performing the prayer of greeting the mosque. The best thing is to perform four cycles, reciting in each cycle al-Ikhlās (Qur'ān 112) fifty times after the Fātiḥa. A Tradition states that anyone who does this will not die before first seeing, or being shown, his abode in Paradise.¹⁹ Do not neglect to perform the

prayer of greeting even if the imam has already begun the sermon.ⁱ It is also part of the Sunna to pray four cycles, reciting al-An'ām (Qur'ān 6), al-Kahf (Qur'ān 18), Tā Hā (Qur'ān 20), and Yā Sīn (Qur'ān 36). If you cannot do so then recite Yā Sīn, al-Dukhān (Qur'ān 44), al-Sajda (Qur'ān 32), and al-Mulk (Qur'ān 67). Do not neglect to recite these chapters on the night before Friday, as there is much merit in it. If you are unable to do so, then recite al-Ikhlāṣ many times. Invoke many blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ too, on this day especially.

When the imam comes in, cease your prayer and conversation and occupy yourself with responding to the muezzin. Listen and pay attention to the sermon, and refrain from saying anything whatsoever during it. A Tradition states, "If someone tells his companion "Hush!" while the imam is giving the sermon, he is guilty of idle speech; and one who engages in idle speech has no Friday prayer" (Bukhārī 934; Abū Dāwūd 1051). This means that even telling someone else to be quiet is counted as speaking, and that one should do it with a gesture, not speech.

Then follow the imam in the prayer as described above. After the *salām*, recite al-Ikhlāṣ seven times and al-Falaq and al-Nās seven times each before saying anything else. This will protect you from one Friday prayer to the next, and guard you from Satan. Then say, "Dear God, O Infinitely Wealthy One, O Praised One, O Initiator, O Returner, O Most Merciful One, O Loving One! Enrich me with what You permit so that I am free from need of what You forbid; and with obedience to You so that I do not disobey You; and with Your bounty so that I am free from need of any but You."

After the Friday prayer, perform two, four, or six cycles of prayer, two by two. The Messenger of God ﷺ is reported to have done all of these in different circumstances. Then stay in the mosque until

i This is another point on which the various legal schools are not unanimous.

the sunset prayer, or the afternoon prayer. Keep a keen watch out for that blessed unknown moment; it could be at any time of the day, so try to meet it while in a state of humble reverence before God Most High.

Do not join social gatherings or storytelling circles in the mosque, but join circles of beneficial knowledge, since that will make you more fearful of God Most High and lessen your desire for the world. Any knowledge that does not call you away from this world and towards the Hereafter is worse for you than ignorance. Seek refuge with God from knowledge without benefit.

Engage in much supplication during sunrise, noon, and sunset, when the *iqāma* is called, when the imam ascends the pulpit, and when the people stand up for the prayer, since that unknown blessed moment might occur at any of these times.

Try to give whatever you can in charity on this day, even if only a little, so that you can combine prayer, fasting, charity, recitation, invocation, vigil, and waiting for one prayer after another. Dedicate this day of the week to your Hereafter, and perhaps it will be an expiation for the rest of the week.

Fasting

You should not restrict your fasting to Ramadan alone, thereby neglecting to profit from voluntary fasting and missing out on higher degrees in Paradise. Otherwise, you will look regretfully towards those who fasted often, glittering above you like stars in the highest heights.

The best and most meritorious days for fasting according to traditional reports are the Day of 'Arafa (for non-pilgrims), the Day of 'Āshūrā', the first ten days of Dhūl-Hijja, the first ten days of Muḥarram; and Rajab and Sha'bān. It is also excellent to fast during the Sacred Months: Dhūl-Qa'da, Dhūl-Hijja, Muḥarram,

and Rajab; one of them is by itself, while the other three are successive. That applies to the days of the year in general.

Within the month, the best days are the first, the middle, and the last day, and also the "white days," namely the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth. Within the week, the best days are Monday, Thursday, and Friday. The sins of the month are expiated by fasting the first, middle, last, and "white days" of the month.ⁱ The sins of the year are expiated by fasting these days and also the aforementioned months.

Do not suppose that fasting means merely refraining from food, drink, and sex; for the Prophet ﷺ said, "How many a person who fasts gains nothing from it but hunger and thirst!"²⁰ Fasting is made complete by restraining the entire body—the ears, the eyes, the tongue, the hands, the feet, and everything else—from what God Most High disapproves. You must keep your eyes from looking at reprehensible things, your tongue from speaking of things that do not concern you, and your ears from listening to what God forbids, since the listener shares the sin of the speaker and is a party to backbiting. You must restrain all of your body parts just as you restrain the belly and the loins. A report says, "Fasting is broken by five things: lying, backbiting, tale-bearing, a false oath, and looking lustfully."²¹

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Fasting is a shield. If any one of you is fasting, he must not engage in lewdness, wickedness, or ignorance. If anyone attacks or insults him, let him say, 'I am fasting'" (Bukhārī 1894).

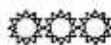
You must also try hard to ensure that the food with which you break the fast is lawful. Do not go overboard and eat more than you usually would each night. If you eat in one sitting what you

i According to various authentic hadiths (e.g. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* 2449), the "white days" (*al-ayyām al-biḍ*) are the middle three days of each month, on whose nights the moon is at its fullest.

usually would in two, then what difference has fasting made? The point of fasting is to break your desires and double the energy that you devote to piety. If you eat in the night what you missed eating during the day, there is no point in fasting at all, and your overfull stomach will make you sluggish. No container is more detestable to God Most High than a stomach filled with food, even if it be lawful—let alone if it be unlawful.

Once you know the true meaning of fasting, do it as often as you can, for it is the foundation of worship and the key to devotion. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "God Most High says, 'Every good deed is rewarded tenfold up to seven hundredfold, except for fasting; that is Mine, and I reward it Myself.'"²² He ﷺ also said, "By Him in Whose hand is my soul, the change in the breath of the one who fasts is more fragrant to God than the scent of musk (Bukhārī 1904). God Most Exalted and High says, 'He sacrifices his passion, his food, and his drink for Me; and so fasting is Mine, and I reward it Myself.'"²³ He ﷺ also said, "Paradise has a gate called Rayyān, through which none enter but those who fast" (Bukhārī 1896).

This should suffice you as an explanation of the acts of worship, as far as the Beginning of Guidance goes. If you would like the same for zakat and the pilgrimage, or further elucidation of prayer and fasting, consult my book *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*.





CHAPTER 2

AVOIDANCE OF SIN

Religion comprises two halves: avoiding sin, and engaging in obedience. Avoiding sin is more difficult; anyone can do good deeds, but only people of true faith can abstain from their passions. Thus the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The true emigrant is the one who emigrates from evil, and the true holy warrior is the one who combats his base desire."¹

Know that when you disobey God, you do so only by the use of your body parts, which God gifted and entrusted to you. To use God's gifts to disobey Him is pure ingratitude, and to betray His trust is pure wickedness. Your body parts are your flock, so be careful how you tend them. "Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is responsible for his flock" (Bukhārī 893).

Know also that each part of your body will bear witness against you at the Resurrection, speaking fluently—that is, eloquently—and exposing you before all creation. God Most High says, *On the Day their tongues, their hands, and their feet testify against them regarding what they used to do.* (Qur'ān 24:24); *Today We shall seal up their mouths, and their hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness to what they used to earn* (Qur'ān 36:65). Therefore, poor soul, guard every part of your body against sin,

especially the seven principal parts, for Hell has *seven gates; each gate shall have of them an allotted share* (Qur'ān 15:44), and none are condemned to pass through those gates except those who disobey God Most High with those seven parts: the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the stomach, the loins, the hands, and the feet.

The Eyes

The eyes were created for you to guide you through darkness, to help you attain your needs, and to allow you to behold the marvels of the kingdoms of heaven and earth and reflect on the signs that they contain. You must therefore protect them from three or four things: looking with lust at unlawful individuals of the opposite sex or an attractive image, looking with contempt at any Muslim, or looking into the flaws of any Muslim.

The Ear

The ears must be protected from listening to heresy, backbiting, indecency, profanity, or discussion of people's faults. For they were created for you to hear the Word of God Most High, the Sunna of His Messenger ﷺ, and the wisdom of His saints, and so that by the attainment of knowledge you might reach enduring kingdom and endless bliss of the Hereafter in the company of the Lord of the Worlds. If you use them to listen to anything sinful, the gift will become a curse, and the means of salvation will become the cause of damnation, which is the greatest loss of all. Do not think that only the speaker incurs the sin and not the listener, for a Tradition

states that "The listener is the partner of the speaker, and is party to the backbiting."ⁱ

The Tongue

The tongue was created for you to engage in much remembrance of God Most High and recitation of His Book; to guide other people to His path; and to express your thoughts for the good of your religion and worldly life. If you use it for anything other than what it was created for, you show ingratitude to God for this gift. Of all your body parts, it is the one that most easily overpowers you; this is true of all people. It is because of what their tongues reap that some people will be dragged into Hell upon their faces.ⁱⁱ You must use all your strength to control it so that you do not join them. A hadith says, "A man might say a word to get a laugh out of his friends, and then plummet into the pit of Hell for seventy years on account of it" (Tirmidhī 2314). It is related that a man was martyred in battle at the time of the Messenger of God ﷺ, and someone said of him, "He has surely gone to Paradise!" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "How do you know? Perhaps he used to speak of things that were not his concern, or refuse to give things that he could easily afford" (Tirmidhī 2316).

You must guard your tongue against eight things. The first is lying. Protect your tongue from it, whether you are being serious or joking. Do not let yourself become accustomed to lying as a joke, lest it draw you into lying in earnest. Lying is one of the principal major sins. If you become known for lying, you will lose your

i 'Ajlūnī notes in *Kashf al-khafā* that no source appears to exist for this hadith, but hadiths with similar sentiments were narrated by al-Ṭabarānī, al-Haythamī, and others.

ii This is a paraphrase of a small part of a well-known hadith: see Ibn Mājah, *Sunan* 3973.

reputation and your word will no longer be trusted. People will look down on you and despise you. If you wish to know how vile it is when you tell lies, consider how you feel about other people who lie, how your soul feels averse to them, and how you despise them and disdain everything they say. Do the same with all of your personal faults. You do not realize how ugly they are when looking at yourself, but only when you see them in others. If you dislike something in another person, other people will certainly dislike it in you. You must not accept this from yourself.

The second is breaking promises. Beware of ever promising something and then not doing it. Indeed, you should be kind to people with actions, not words; but if you are forced to make a promise, beware of breaking it unless you are truly unable to keep it or something prevents you from doing so. Breaking promises is one of the marks of hypocrisy and poor character. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Three things mark a person as a hypocrite, even if he prays and fasts: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; when he is given a trust, he betrays it."²

The third is backbiting, which Islam holds to be worse than thirty acts of adultery, as is reported in the tradition.³ Backbiting means to say anything about a person that he would dislike if he heard it; even if what you say is true, you are guilty of backbiting and wrongdoing. Beware especially of the kind of backbiting in which ostentatious religious people engage, which is to backbite by implication rather than directly, such as by saying, "May God rectify him, for I am sad to see what has become of him. We ask God to rectify both us and him." This combines two foul deeds: first it is backbiting by implication, and second it is self-aggrandizement and pretension to sinlessness and righteousness. If by saying, "May God rectify him" you truly meant to pray for the person, you would do it in private; and if you were truly saddened by his condition, you would not wish to expose him and reveal

his faults. Expressing sadness at his faults is simply a sly way of defaming him.

Sufficient discouragement against backbiting is found in the Words of God Most High, *Do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it!* (Qur'ān 49:12). God thus compares backbiting to cannibalism. What more reason could one need to avoid it? Another thing ought to dissuade you from backbiting other Muslims, if you stop to consider it: look at yourself and ask if you have any flaws, whether open or secret. Have you ever committed sin, whether in public or in private? If you have, then know that the other person was no more able to avoid it than you were, and that your excuses are no better than his. If you would hate to be exposed and have your flaws discussed, he would also hate it. If you conceal his flaws, God will conceal yours; if you expose him, God will unleash sharp tongues against you to rip your reputation to shreds in this world, and then in the Hereafter He will expose you before all creation on the Day of Resurrection.

And if when you examine yourself inside and out you do not discover any flaws or shortcomings whatsoever, whether religious or worldly, then know that ignorance of your own flaws is the most heinous kind of foolishness; and there is no worse flaw than foolishness. If God wished any good for you at all, He would make you aware of your own defects. To look approvingly upon yourself is the height of stupidity and ignorance. Even if your appraisal were accurate, you ought to give thanks to God Most High and not spoil it by defaming people and ruining their reputations, since that is one of the worst of all flaws.

The fourth is arguing, debating, and disputing with people. To do so is offensive to your opponent, since you accuse him of ignorance and attack him. It is also self-aggrandizing, since it amounts to praising yourself for your intelligence and learning. In addition,

it causes disturbance to your life, since if you debate with a fool he will offend you, and if you debate with an intelligent man you will annoy him and incur his rancor. The Prophet ﷺ said, "When a person refrains from arguing when he is wrong, God builds for him a house in the middle of Paradise. When a person refrains from arguing when he is right, God builds for him a house in the heights of Paradise" (Tirmidhī 1994). Do not let Satan deceive you by saying, "You must uphold the truth, and not compromise on it!" Satan always entices fools towards evil by disguising it as good. Do not let Satan make sport of you. Upholding the truth is well and good if the person will accept it from you, in which case the way of doing it is to offer sincere advice with subtlety, not with disputation. Advice has a distinctive form and character, and it requires delicacy; otherwise it becomes criticism, and does more harm than good. Anyone who keeps the company of the would-be religious scholars of this age will become accustomed to debate and argumentation and will find it difficult to be silent, since such evil scholars will teach him that debate is where virtue lies, and that skill in argumentation is to be praised. Flee from them as you would from a lion! Know that disputation incurs hatred from God as well as from people.

The fifth is self-aggrandizement. God Most High says, *Do not claim purity for yourselves; He knows best who is reverent* (Qur'ān 53:32). Once a sage was asked, "Can it be wicked to tell the truth?" He replied, "Yes—when a person praises himself." Beware of falling into the habit of doing so, and know that it causes you to fall in people's estimation as well as incurring the disapproval of God Most High. If you wish to see how your self-praise does not elevate you in the estimation of others, consider how you feel about your peers if they praise themselves for their virtue, renown, or wealth. Your heart objects to their claims and your nature finds it unbearable; and once you are away from their company, you condemn

them for it. Be aware, then, that other people feel the same way about you when you praise yourself: their hearts condemn you, and they will say so out loud once you leave their company.

The sixth is cursing. Beware of cursing anything that God Most High has created, whether it be an animal, or food, or a particular person. Do not categorically accuse anyone who prays towards the Qibla of idolatry, unbelief, or hypocrisy. Only God knows what people harbor in their secret hearts, so do not attempt to come between them and God. Know also that on the Day of Resurrection, you will not be asked why you never cursed So-and-So or why you refrained from speaking about him. Even if you never cursed the Devil once in your whole life, or spoke about him at all, you would not be asked about it on that Day. But if you curse any creature of God Most High, you will be asked to explain yourself. Do not speak critically of any of God's creation. The Prophet ﷺ would not even criticize bad food, but would simply refrain from eating what he did not like.

The seventh is supplicating against other people. Keep your tongue from supplicating against any of God's creatures. If someone wrongs you, resign the matter to God Most High. A hadith says, "A victim of injustice might supplicate against the one who wronged him until he gains restitution, but then find himself in the wrongdoer's debt—a debt that he will seek from him on the Day of Resurrection."ⁱ Once someone was speaking critically about al-Ḥajjājⁱⁱ when one of the righteous early Muslims said, "God will exact retribution on behalf of al-Ḥajjāj from those who attacked him with their words, just as He will exact it from al-Ḥajjāj on behalf of those whom he wronged."

i 'Irāqī states in *al-Mughnī* that he was unable to find a source for this hadith.

ii A controversial Umayyad governor, renowned for his severity (d. 95/714).

The eighth is joking, mocking, and ridiculing other people. Keep your tongue from this, whether in earnest or in jest, for it detracts from your dignity, ruins your gravity, causes alienation, and damages the heart. It is the first step towards stubbornness, anger, and estrangement, and it implants rancor in the hearts of others. Never mock anyone. If they mock you, do not respond, but leave them be until they talk about something else. Be one of those *who, when they come across vain talk, pass by with dignity* (Qur'ān 25:72).

These, then, are the blights of the tongue. Nothing will help you to cure them but isolation, or maintaining silence except when absolutely necessary. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ used to hold a stone in his mouth to prevent him from speaking without need. He would point to his mouth and say, "This is the source of all my troubles." Do your best to control your tongue, for it is the most likely cause of your downfall in this life and the next.

The Stomach

Guard the stomach against consuming anything unlawful or doubtful. Strive to seek what is lawful; and once you find it, strive to restrain yourself and consume less than enough to fill your belly. Satiety hardens the heart, dulls the mind, impairs the memory, makes the body too sluggish to engage in worship and study, strengthens the passions, and helps the forces of Satan. Filling oneself with lawful food is the beginning of every evil, to say nothing of unlawful food. Seeking the lawful is obligatory for every Muslim. Trying to engage in worship and study after eating unlawful food is like building upon a dung heap. If you can be content with a coarse garment for a year and with two pieces of barley bread every day and night, and you give up the enjoyment of delicacies, you will never lack enough of the lawful to meet your needs.

There are many kinds of lawful food. You are not required to investigate every hidden aspect, but you must avoid whatever you know to be unlawful or suspect to be so because of some reasonable sign. The patently unlawful is obvious and need not be discussed. As for what is reasonably suspected to be unlawful, it means the property of a ruler and his functionaries, or the property of people whose entire income is from unlawful work such as professional mourning, selling wine, usury, flutes and other forbidden instruments, and so on. If you are aware that most of a person's property is certain to be unlawful, then whatever you take from him should be considered unlawful, despite the minute possibility of it being lawful, since one must rule on the side of caution. One thing that is totally unlawful is consuming endowment funds in any manner not stipulated by the founder of the endowment. If a person is not engaged in the study of jurisprudence, anything he takes from madrasa funds is unlawful. If a person has committed a sin that would disqualify him from giving legal testimony, anything he takes in the name of the Sufis, whether an endowment or otherwise, is unlawful. I devoted a book to the discussion of doubtful matters and the lawful and unlawful in *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, so look for it there. Knowing and seeking the lawful is the duty of every Muslim, just as the five daily prayers are.

The Loins

Protect the loins from everything that God Most High forbids, and be among those who, as He says, *guard their chastity—except from their spouses or those their right hands possess, for then they are free from blame; but whosoever seeks beyond that, those are transgressors* (Qur'ān 23:5-7). The only way to protect the loins is to protect the eyes from looking, the heart from thinking, and the

stomach from doubtful food and satiety; they are the instigators and sowers of lust.

The Hands

Guard your hands against using them to strike any Muslim; or to take or deal in money from an unlawful source; or to cause harm or annoyance to any of mankind; or to betray any trust, or misappropriate anything left in your keeping; or to write, or say, anything impermissible. The pen is, as it were, your "second tongue," so guard it against writing anything that the tongue should be guarded against speaking.

The Feet

Guard your feet against walking towards what is unlawful, or to the door of a tyrannical ruler. Walking to tyrannical rulers without being forced to do so is a grave sin, because it amounts to humbling oneself before them and approving of their wrongdoing. God Most High has commanded us to turn away from them, saying, *And incline not toward the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should touch you; for you would have no protectors apart from God, and then you would not be helped* (Qur'ān 11:113). If you do it in order to seek their wealth, that is tantamount to walking toward what is unlawful. The Prophet ﷺ said, "When someone humbles himself before a wealthy righteous man for the sake of his wealth, two-thirds of his religion depart."ⁱ That is in the case of a wealthy man who is righteous, to say nothing of a wicked one!

i 'Ajlūnī attributes this in *Kashf al-khafā'* (2444) to a narration of Bayhaqī with a similar wording.

In general, whenever any part of your body is in motion or at rest, it is a gift to you from God Most High. Do not move any part of it in a manner that is disobedient to Him in any way, but use it always in obedience to Him. Know that if you are negligent, you will bear the consequences; but if you are diligent, you will reap the fruits. God has no need of you or your deeds, but *Every soul is held in pledge for what it has earned* (Qur'ān 74:38). Beware of saying, "God is Generous and Merciful, and He will forgive the sinners." This is a true statement used for a false purpose, and anyone who makes it is a fool according to the testimony of the Prophet ﷺ, who said, "The intelligent person is the one who calls himself to account and works for what will come after death. The fool is the one who pursues his base desires and yet expects all kinds of things from God" (Ibn Mājah 4260).

If that is your attitude, you are like a person who wishes to become a religious scholar without engaging in any study, and who instead remains idle and says, "God is Generous and Merciful, and He is well able to instill knowledge in my heart as He did for His Prophets and saints, without any effort or revision." Or you are like someone who desires wealth but refrains from engaging in agriculture, commerce, or employment, and instead says, "God is Generous and Merciful, and the treasures of heaven and earth are His. He is well able to direct me to some buried treasure so that I do not have to earn a living; for He has certainly done so for others." If you heard these two men say that, you would scoff at their idiocy, even though every word they say about God's generosity and power is true. Likewise, people of religious insight will scoff at you if you expect forgiveness without working for it. God Most High says, *Man shall have only what he strives for* (Qur'ān 53:39); *You are only being repaid for what you used to do* (Qur'ān 52:16); and *Truly the righteous shall be in bliss, and truly the iniquitous shall be in Hellfire* (Qur'ān 82:13-14). If

you do not simply rely on His generosity instead of making the effort to acquire knowledge or wealth, you should not neglect to prepare for the Hereafter either. Do not slack off, for the Lord of this world and the Hereafter is One, and He is Generous and Merciful in both. His generosity does not increase because of your obedience; rather, His generosity lies in directing you to the path that leads to eternal life in a kingdom everlasting and perpetual bliss, in return for patiently abstaining from your passions for a few short days. That is the height of generosity.

Do not delude yourself with the foolish excuses of the indolent, but follow the example of the righteous Prophets, the men of great resolve and wisdom. Do not expect to reap what you have not sown. It may be hoped that all who pray, fast, struggle, and fear God will be forgiven.

These, then, are some of the ways in which you must protect your external body parts. Yet the actions of these parts are determined only by the attributes of the heart, and so if you wish to protect your body, you must purify your heart. This means inward God-consciousness. The heart is "the morsel of flesh whose soundness determines the soundness of the rest of the body, and whose corruption leads to the corruption of the rest of the body" (Bukhārī 2051). Keep yourself occupied with setting it right, so that your body parts will be set right. The way to set it right is to maintain constant vigilance.

The Sins of the Heart

The heart has many blameworthy attributes, the road to purifying it from its vices is long, and the method of curing it is arcane. In fact, the knowledge and practice of this path has altogether disappeared due to humanity's lack of self-awareness and their engrossment in worldly delights. I have examined this in detail in

The Revival of the Religious Sciences, in the quarters on the Ways to Destruction and the Ways to Salvation. However, I will warn you here of three vices of the heart that are especially prominent among the self-styled religious scholars of these times. Be on your guard against them, for as well as being ways to destruction in their own right, they are also the roots of many other vices. These three vices are envy, ostentation, and self-satisfaction. Strive to purify your heart of them. If you can manage to do so, you will know how to deal with the other things that lead to destruction. If you cannot, you will be all the more unable to deal with the rest. Do not suppose that you can maintain a sound intention to pursue knowledge as long as there is any envy, ostentation, or self-satisfaction in your heart. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Three things lead to destruction: indulging avarice, giving rein to base desire, and being satisfied with oneself."⁴

Envy

Envy is rooted in avarice. The stingy person withholds what he possesses from others. The avaricious person covets the favors that God Most High gifts to His servants, though they belong to the treasuries of God's might, not to him, and therefore his avarice is greater. The envious person is pained when he sees God Most High favor any of His servants with something from the treasuries of His might, whether it be knowledge, wealth, love in people's hearts, or any kind of good fortune. His resentment is so strong that he would like to see that favor taken away from its recipient, even if he would not get it himself. This is the foulest attitude of all, and therefore the Prophet ﷺ said, "Envy consumes good deeds as fire consumes kindling" (Abū Dāwūd 4903).

The envious person is always in torment, never in mercy. He is constantly tormented in this world, for he is always surrounded by

many peers and acquaintances whom God graces with knowledge, wealth, or prestige. He therefore suffers throughout his life until he dies; and his torment in the Hereafter will be even worse. No one achieves true faith until he likes for all his fellow-Muslims what he likes for himself. He ought to hold himself equal to them in good times and bad, because the Muslims are like one building with each part supporting the other, or like one body in which if one part ails, the rest ails too. If that is not how you feel in your heart, it is more vital to strive to rid yourself of this destructive vice than to engage in the study of obstruse branches of learning or the science of argumentation.

Ostentation

Ostentation is covert idolatry, which is one of the two kinds of idolatry. What it means is that you seek status in the hearts of other people in order to attain renown and respect. Love of renown is "giving rein to base desire," which is what ruins most people; for people are ruined by nobody but themselves. If people were truly honest, they would see that most of the things they do—whether it be seeking knowledge or engaging in worship, not to mention their regular activities—are motivated by the desire to be seen by others; but this motivation renders their deeds fruitless. This is why a hadith tells of how a martyr will be condemned to Hell on the Day of Resurrection, and will say, "But Lord, I was martyred in Your cause!" God Most High will reply, "No—you wanted it to be said that you were brave; and indeed that was said—and that was your reward." Analogous things will be said to a scholar, a pilgrim, and a reciter of the Qur'ān (Muslim 1905).

Self-Satisfaction

Self-satisfaction, pride, or vanity is the inveterate disease. It means for a person to see himself in a good and glorious light, while turning a disparaging eye upon others. The result of this is that when he speaks, he will be forever saying, "I..., I...", as the accursed Iblis did: *I am better than him. You created me from fire, and created him from clay* (Qur'ān 38:76). In company, it will manifest in a pompous and haughty attitude, always desiring to direct the conversation and resentful of being contradicted. The proud person is the one who resents being given advice but insists rudely upon giving it to others. Anyone who sees himself as better than any of God's creatures is guilty of pride. You must realize that the best person is the one who is highest in the estimation of God Most High in the Hereafter, which is a mystery that will not be revealed until then. It is pure ignorance to believe that you are better than anyone. On the contrary, you should never look at anybody without seeing them as better than you and having superiority over you.

When you see a child, say, "He has never disobeyed God, but I have; so he must be better than me." When you see an elderly person, say, "He worshiped God before I did, so he must be better than me." When you see a scholar, say, "He has been given gifts that I have not, and reached a level that I have not, and he knows things that I do not. How could I be his equal?" When you see an uneducated person, say, "He has sinned against God in ignorance, while I have done so knowingly; so God's case against me is stronger. Nor do I know what my fate will be at death, or his." If he is an unbeliever, say, "For all I know, he might embrace Islam and have a good end and righteous works, and be pulled out of sin thanks to Islam like a hair pulled from a ball of dough. As for me, it may be—God forbid! —that God will misguide me so that I die with

evil deeds, and so he is brought near to God in the Hereafter while I join the ranks of the lost.”

Pride will not leave your heart until you realize that the great ones are those who are great in the sight of God Most High; and that depends on one's state at the moment of death, which is uncertain. Fearing for your own final moments ought to keep you from considering yourself above God's servants, for you cannot be sure of it. Your faith and certainty in the present moment do not guarantee that you will not change in the future. God is the Turner of Hearts, and He guides whom He will and sends astray whom He will.

There are many traditional reports about envy, pride, ostentation, and self-satisfaction, but there is one hadith that sums it all up. Ibn al-Mubārakⁱ narrated with his chain of transmission that a man said to Mu'ādh,ⁱⁱ “Tell me something you heard from the Messenger of God ﷺ.” Mu'ādh wept until it seemed he would never cease, but finally he fell silent. Then he said, “Ah, how I long to be reunited with the Messenger of God ﷺ!” After that, he said:

“I heard the Messenger of God ﷺ say to me, ‘Mu'ādh, I shall tell you something. If you keep to it, it will benefit you before God. If you squander it and fail to preserve it, you will have no case before God on the Day of Resurrection. Mu'ādh, before He created the heavens and earth, God Hallowed and Most High created seven angels, and assigned to each of the seven heavens an angel to be its gatekeeper. The guardian angels ascend with a person's deeds from morning until evening, shining like the sun. When they reach the lowest heaven, they cause it to grow and multiply. But the angel assigned to that heaven says to the guardian angels, “Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer! I am the Angel of

i An early hadith narrator (d. 181/797).

ii Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, a beloved Companion of the Prophet ﷺ (d. 18/639).

Backbiting; my Lord has commanded me not to let anyone who backbites people pass beyond me."

"Then the guardian angels bring another person's radiant good work and make it grow and multiply, but when they reach the second heaven, the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer! He only did it to attain worldly advantage. I am the Angel of Boasting; my Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me, for he used to boast in the company of others."

"Then the guardian angels bring the radiant work of another person: charity, prayer, and fasting that impress them. They bear it to the third heaven, but the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer! I am the Angel of Pride; my Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me, for he used to behave proudly in the company of others."

"Then the guardian angels bring the work of another person, glittering like a bright star and ringing with glorification, prayer, fasting, and greater and lesser pilgrimages. They bear it to the fourth heaven, but the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face, back, and belly of its doer! I am the Angel of Self-Satisfaction; my Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me, for whenever he did a deed, he felt pleased with it."

"Then the guardian angels bring the work of another person and bear it up to the fifth heaven like a bride being presented to her bridegroom, but the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer, and hang it around his neck! I am the Angel of Envy. He used to envy those who learned and did deeds like his; whenever someone attained merit through worship, he would envy them and criticize them. My Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me."

"Then the guardian angels bring the work of another person, shining like the sun: prayer, zakat, greater and lesser pilgrimages,

struggle, and fasting. They bear it to the sixth heaven, but the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer! He never once showed mercy to any servant of God suffering from misfortune or illness, but would insult them. I am the Angel of Mercy; my Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me."

"Then the guardian angels bring the work of another person—fasting, prayer, charity, struggle, piety, humming like a bee, shining like the sun, accompanied by three thousand angels. They bear it to the seventh heaven, but the angel there says, "Stop! Take this work and strike with it the face of its doer, and strike his limbs, and set it as a lock upon his heart! I am the Angel of Remembrance; I keep from my Lord any deed that was not done for the sake of His Face. He did not do his work for God Most High. He merely wanted to be esteemed by jurists, respected by religious scholars, and held in renown throughout the lands. My Lord has commanded me not to let his work pass beyond me. Any deed not done sincerely for God is ostentation; and God does not accept the deeds of the ostentatious."

"Then the guardian angels bring the work of another person: prayer, zakat, fasting, greater and lesser pilgrimages, good character, silence, and remembrance of God Most High. The angels of the seven heavens welcome it, until it passes through all the veils to God Most High, where they stand before Him and attest that it is a righteous deed done sincerely for Him. God Most High says, "You are the guardians of My servant's work, but I am the Watcher over his heart. He did this work not for Me but for another, and so My curse is upon him." All the angels say, "Upon him be Your curse and ours!" The seven heavens and their inhabitants curse him."

Mu'adh then wept until he sobbed. Then he related, "I said, 'Messenger of God, you are the Messenger of God, and I am just Mu'adh. How can I hope for salvation and deliverance from that?'

He replied, 'Follow me, even if your deeds are lacking. Mu'ādh, guard your tongue from speaking ill of your brethren, especially those who know the Qur'ān by heart. Take responsibility for your own sins instead of burdening others with them. Do not try to exonerate yourself by castigating them. Do not elevate yourself above them. Do not let working for this world detract from working for the Hereafter. Do not be ostentatious in your works. Do not be proud in company, lest people avoid you due to your bad character. Do not speak secretly to one man while another man is with you. Do not lord it over people, lest you be cut off from the good things of this world and the Hereafter. Do not tear people apart with your tongue, lest the hounds of Hell tear you apart on the Day of Resurrection in Hell. God says, *By those that pluck out harshly* (Qur'ān 79:2). Do you know what they are, Mu'ādh?' I said, 'What are they, Messenger of God, may my parents be your ransom?' He replied, 'The hounds of Hell, who pluck flesh from bone.' I said, 'Messenger of God, may my parents be your ransom! Who can possibly avoid these traits?' He replied, 'Mu'ādh, it is easy for those for whom God Most High makes it easy. All it takes is that you like for other people what you like for yourself, and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. Then, Mu'ādh, you will be safe and sound.'ⁱ

Khālid ibn Ma'dānⁱⁱ said, "I never saw anyone recite the Holy Qur'ān more frequently than Mu'ādh, because of this momentous hadith."

Seeker of knowledge, reflect on these traits and know that the chief reason they become entrenched in the heart is the seeking of knowledge for the sake of disputation and rivalry. An ordinary

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- i Several hadith masters, including al-Jawzī, al-Suyūṭī, and al-Mundhirī concluded that this hadith is most likely a forgery.
 - ii A narrator who was a Follower, i.e. belonged to the second generation of Muslims (d. 104/722).

person is less prone to most of these traits, but a would-be scholar is susceptible to them and at risk of being ruined by them. Consider what is more important to you. Is it learning how to avoid these ruinous traits, rectify your heart, and make your Hereafter thrive? Or it is more important to join others in useless debate, seeking only the kind of knowledge that exacerbates pride, ostentation, envy, and self-satisfaction, until you join the ranks of the ruined?

These three traits are the seeds of all the heart's vices, and all of them are planted on the same patch of ground, which is love of this world. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Love of this world is the root of all sin."⁹ Yet this world is also the field where the crops of the Hereafter are sown. When you take no more from the world than what you need, the world is your field. When you desire the world in order to enjoy it, it is the scene of your destruction.

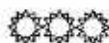


So there you have a brief overview of the outward science of God-consciousness, which is the Beginning of Guidance. Once you have used it to put yourself and your obedience to the test, move on to *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, and you will see how to proceed to the inward meaning of God-consciousness. When you fill your inner heart with this consciousness, the veils between you and your Lord will be lifted, and the lights of experiential knowledge will be shown to you. Springs of wisdom will flow from your heart, and the secrets of the physical and spiritual worlds will become clear to you. You will attain knowledge that will make you feel nothing but contempt for all these contrived sciences which were unheard of in the time of the Companions and Followers.

If, however, the knowledge you seek is mere hearsay, argument, and debate, how unfortunate you are, how long you will toil, and

greatly you will lose out! Do as you please, but the world you seek in return for your religion will not submit to you, and the Hereafter will be wrested from you. He who seeks to trade his religion for the world will lose them both; he who forgoes the world for the sake of his religion will gain them both.

That, then, is all the guidance I have to offer regarding the beginning of the path of your dealings with God Most High; which lies in doing as He commands and abstaining from what He forbids. I will close by drawing your attention to some aspects of the standards of good conduct to which you ought to hold yourself when dealing with God's servants, and how to keep their company in this world.





CHAPTER 3

GOOD CONDUCT IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS

Good Conduct With God

Know that your true companion, the one who never leaves your side whether you are at home or abroad, asleep or awake, throughout your life and your death too, is none other than your Lord, your Master, your Guardian, your Creator. Whenever you remember Him, He keeps you company, for He says, "I am the Companion of the one who remembers Me."ⁱ If you ever feel brokenhearted because of your shortcomings in religion, He is your Companion and Comforter, for He says, "I am with those who are brokenhearted for My sake."ⁱⁱ If you knew Him as He ought to be known, you would take Him as a companion and leave people aside. If you cannot do this all the time, at least make sure that you dedicate some part of the day and night to being alone with your Lord and enjoying intimate discourse with Him. But when doing so you must be aware of the proper conduct of keeping the company of

i 'Ajlūnī notes in *Kashf al-khafā* (614) that there does not appear to be a source for this saying as a hadith.

God Most High. Lower your head, close your eyes, focus your concentration, remain silent, and keep still. Obey His commands and prohibitions readily. Do not object to the vicissitudes of fate. Maintain remembrance and contemplation. Prefer truth to falsehood. Relinquish your expectations of your fellow men. Be humble, contrite, and ashamed before His awesome Presence. Refrain from plotting and planning for your livelihood, and instead trust in what has been apportioned to you and rely upon the grace of God Most High, knowing that what He chooses for you is best. This must be your attitude throughout the night and day, for it is proper conduct with the Companion Who never leaves you—unlike others, who all leave you at some time or other.

Good Conduct for a Schôlar

If you are a religious scholar, there are seventeen rules of conduct to which you must keep. Be compassionate and maintain a forbearing temper. Sit with dignity and sobriety, with your head lowered. Do not be haughty with anyone, except with evildoers to dissuade them from their evildoing. Maintain a humble attitude in festivals and gatherings. Do not engage in jocularly or jesting. Be gentle with your students, and bear with them even when they are insolent. Offer guidance to correct them when they do not understand something. Do not become enraged at them. Do not be too proud to say, "I do not know." Pay full attention when someone asks you a question, and make sure you understand what they are asking. Accept sound arguments. Yield to the truth and defer to it whenever you make a mistake. Do not allow a student to pursue knowledge that would be bad for him. Ensure that he seeks beneficial knowledge for the sake of God Most High, and not for any other motive. Prevent him from engaging in matters that are only communal obligations before he has met his own personal

obligation, which means rectifying his outward and inward being with God-consciousness. Hold yourself first and foremost to God-consciousness, so that the student may follow your example, first in action and then in words.

Good Conduct for a Student

Greet your teacher first before he greets you. Do not speak much in his presence. Speak only of things about which the teacher asks you. Ask permission before asking questions. Do not say, when he speaks, "So-and-So says otherwise." Do not imply that you disagree with him, as though you knew more than your teacher does. Do not pose a question to anyone other than him when in his lesson. Do not let your gaze wander here and there, but sit still and respectfully with your head lowered, as if praying. Do not overburden him with endless questions. When he stands up, stand for him. Do not chase after him talking and asking questions. Do not ask him questions when he is on his way home. Do not think ill of him because of actions that appear to be objectionable, for there may be more to it than meets the eye. Remember how Moses عليه السلام said to Khidr عليه السلام, *Did you make a hole in it to drown the people in it? You have indeed done a dreadful thing!* (Qur'ān 18:71), yet he was wrong to criticize him while relying on outward appearances.

Good Conduct With One's Parents

Listen to what your parents say. Stand up for them when they stand. Obey them. Do not walk in front of them. Do not raise your voice above theirs. Answer them eagerly when they call you. Be keen to earn their approval. *Lower to them the wing of humility* (Qur'ān 17:24). Do not remind them of how dutiful or obedient you are to

them, as if they ought to be grateful. Do not roll your eyes at them or frown in their faces. Do not travel without their permission.

Good Conduct With Others

Aside from this, all other people are one of three things to you: friends, acquaintances, or strangers. If you find yourself in the company of strangers from among the masses, refrain from joining their conversation, and pay scant heed to their chatter. Pretend not to hear any bad language they might use. Do not mix with them too often, and avoid getting into situations where you need to do so. Point out their misdeeds to them gently, if you have any hope that they will accept your advice.

In the case of brethren and friends, there are two duties that you must fulfil. The first is satisfy the requirements of companionship and friendship; do not make friends with anyone who is not suitable for it. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "A man shares the religion of his close friend, so be careful whom you choose as your close friends" (Abū Dāwūd 4833).

If you wish to find a friend to accompany you in your studies and your religious and worldly affairs, look for five qualities in him:

The first quality is intelligence. There is no good in keeping the company of a fool, for it will only end in alienation and estrangement. The best you can expect is that he will harm you when trying to benefit you. An intelligent enemy is better than a foolish friend. 'Alī ؑ said:

Do not befriend an ignorant man;
Beware of him, and again beware!
Many a fool befriended a wise man,
Then dragged him down to his own level.
Whenever two men walk together,

One will be compared to the other,
Just as two sandals side by side
Are called a pair, as though they were one;
For two things next to each other
Invite analogy and comparison;
And whenever two hearts meet,
They have ways of knowing each other.

The second quality is good character. Do not befriend anyone with a poor character, by which I mean anyone who cannot control himself when he feels anger or desire. 'Alqama al-'Uṭāridī,ⁱ may God have mercy on him, summed up this point in the counsel he gave to his son upon his death: "Dear son, when you wish to choose a friend, choose someone like this: when you serve him, he looks after you; when you keep his company, he improves you; when you suffer misfortune, he helps you; when you reach out your hand toward goodness, he reaches out his; when he sees you do right, he notes it; when he sees you do wrong, he stops it; when you speak, he believes you; when you try something, he aids and assists you; when the two of you dispute over something, he gives way to you." 'Ali ﷺ said in a poem:

Your true brother is he who is with you,
And who would harm himself to help you;
The one who, when misfortunes break you,
Would gladly break himself to mend you.

The third quality is righteousness. Do not befriend an open sinner who persists in major sin. No one who feared God would do so, and if a person does not fear God, you cannot ever be sure he

i A hadith narrator from Kufa (d. 256/869).

will not betray you, for such people are erratic and unstable. God Most High said to His Prophet ﷺ: *Do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who follows his caprices so that his conduct is all excess* (Qur'ān 18:28). Beware of the company of the iniquitous, for continual exposure to iniquity and sin will cause your heart to lose its aversion to sin and deem it trivial. That is why people so readily engage in the sin of backbiting: they have become used to it. Yet if they saw a religious scholar wearing a gold ring or silk scarf they would be quick to criticize him for it, though backbiting is a far worse sin.

The fourth quality is that the person does not covet this world, as coveting this world is a deadly poison. This is because it is natural for people to emulate one another, and this happens whether one is aware of it or not. Keeping company with a greedy person will only make you more greedy yourself; keeping company with ascetics will make you more ascetic.

The fifth quality is truthfulness. Do not befriend a liar, or he will be a cause of delusion for you. He is like a mirage that distorts things for you, so that you mistake what is near for far and what is far for near.

Now, it may be that you will not find anyone who possesses all five of these qualities, either in madrasas or in mosques. In that case, you must do one of two things. Either keep to isolation and seclusion, since therein lies security; or else mix with those of your colleagues who possess at least some of these qualities. In that case, know that there are three kinds of brother: a brother for your Hereafter, for which piety is all that matters; a brother for your worldly life, for which what matters is good character; and a brother to be close to, for which what matters is that you be safe from any evil, temptation, or sin from him.

There are three kinds of people. Some are like food, which one cannot do without. Others are like medicine, which one needs

from time to time. Others are like illness, which one never needs but must sometimes suffer; that is the type who provides neither companionship nor benefit, and of whom you must rid yourself if you are to be well. Yet there is great benefit in encountering such people, if you are given the grace to see it: they show you their foul character and behavior, which inspires you to avoid emulating them. Happy is the man who is shown the truth reflected in others; "the believer is the believer's mirror." When asked who had taught him good conduct, Jesus ﷺ replied, "No one did; I simply saw the ignorance of ignorant people, and avoided it." He certainly spoke the truth, may peace and blessings be upon him and upon our Prophet! If people would only avoid the things they do not like others doing, they would have perfect conduct and would not need to be taught it.

The second duty you must fulfil is to honor the rights of friendship. When the pact of friendship is forged between you and another, there are certain rights that you must honor, which constitute the proper conduct of the friendship. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Brothers are like hands, each one washing the other."ⁱ

The Prophet ﷺ once went into a thicket and broke off a couple of tooth-sticks from it. One was bent, the other straight. He gave the straight one to one of his Companions and kept the bent one for himself. The Companion said, "Messenger of God, you deserve the straight one more than I do." He ﷺ replied, "Anyone who keeps the company of another, even for a single hour of the day, will be asked about his companionship: did he honor the rights of God Most High therein, or squander them?"ⁱⁱ

He ﷺ also said, "Whenever two people become companions, the most beloved of them to God is the one who is kinder to the other."ⁱⁱⁱ

i 'Irāqī attributes this to a narration of al-Sulami (*Mughni* 2/158).

ii 'Irāqī noted that he could not find a source for this hadith (*Mughni* 2/175).

iii There is a hadith with a similar wording in Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 566.

Good conduct towards a friend means treating one's wealth as his, or at least sharing one's excess wealth with him when he needs it. It means being ready to offer help when he needs it without his having to ask. It means keeping his secrets and concealing his defects. It means refraining from telling him the hurtful things people may say about him, but telling him the pleasing things they say. It means listening when he speaks and not arguing with him. It means calling him by whatever name he likes the best, praising him for his good qualities, and thanking him for his favors. It means coming to his defense in his absence when people impugn his honor, just as he would defend himself if he were present. It means giving him gentle advice and direction when he needs it.

Pardon your friend for his errors and slips, and do not take him to task for them. Pray for him when you are alone, both during his life and after his death. Maintain good relations with his family and relatives after he dies. Go easy on him and do not overburden him with your needs, but set his heart at ease regarding his own affairs. Express happiness at things that make him joyful, and sorrow at things that pain him. Feel this in your heart truly as you express it, so that your affection for him is sincere both openly and inwardly.

Greet him first when he approaches. Make space for him to sit at a gathering, and get up to show him out when he leaves. Be quiet when he is speaking until he is finished, and do not interrupt. In sum, treat him as you would like to be treated. If you do not like for your brother what you like for yourself, your brotherhood is false and will only bring you grief in this life and the Next.

That, then, is proper conduct with unknown strangers and with friends and brethren. As for the third category of people, mere acquaintances, it is best to avoid them. You only experience evil from people you know. Friends will help you, and strangers will pay you no heed. It is from acquaintances—those who merely act like friends—that all evil comes. Keep clear of them as much as

you are able to. If you are forced to associate with them in the madrasa, in the local mosque or Friday mosque, at the market, or in the town, you must not disparage any of them, for it may well be that they are better than you. Do not think too highly of them either, on account of their worldly fortune, or you will be destroyed. The world and all that it contains are trifling in God's sight, and as long as you venerate people of the world in your heart you fall in His sight. Beware of trading away your religion to them in order to attain the things of their world. Those who do so will fall in their eyes too, and then be deprived of what they have.

If they show you enmity, do not show it back to them, for you will not be able to have the patience to resist them without squandering your religion in the process, as well as suffering at their hands.

Do not be at ease with them when they are kind to you, or when they praise you to your face and show you affection. If you were to seek out an actually genuine instance of this, you would not find one in every hundred. Do not expect any of them to be true to you, whether in public or private. If they speak ill of you in your absence, do not be surprised or angry. If you are honest with yourself, you will see that you are guilty of the same, even with your friends and relatives, even with your teachers and parents; you say things about them in their absence which you would not say to their faces.

Give up any expectation that you may be harboring of benefiting from their wealth, prestige, or assistance. Those who entertain high hopes are usually disappointed in the future, as well as lacking dignity in the present.

If you ask a favor of any of them and he grants it, give thanks to God Most High, and thank him too. If he does not, do not rebuke him or complain to him, or enmity will grow between you. Be like a believer who looks for excuses for others, not like a

hypocrite who seeks out their flaws. Say, "For all I know, he may have a good excuse."

Do not offer any of them advice unless it seems beforehand that he would be likely to accept it. Otherwise, he will not heed you but will become your rival. If they are incorrect about something and have already shown that they will not accept instruction from anyone, do not attempt to teach them, since even if they learn something they will become your enemies. However, if they are doing something sinful without realizing it, you should explain this to them gently and without aggression.

If you receive generosity and goodness from them, give thanks to God for endearing you to them. If you witness evil from them, leave them to God Most High, and seek refuge with Him from their evil. Do not rebuke them or say to them, "Why do you not give me my due? I am So-and-So, son of So-and-So! I am a great scholar!" Only idiots talk like that; and the worst fool of all is the one who praises himself. Know that God Most High has only unleashed them upon you because of some sin that you have committed. Ask His forgiveness for your sin, and know that it is a punishment from Him, Exalted is He. Give ear to their rights but be deaf to their falsehoods; speak of their virtues, but be silent about their flaws.

Beware of mixing with the self-proclaimed religious scholars of the age, especially those who engage in debate and argumentation. Stay clear of them, because they are envious folk who eagerly await ill fortune visiting you, and who entertain all kinds of suppositions about you and point their fingers behind your back. They keep track of everything you say in their presence in order to confront you with it when they become enraged at you. They will give you no peace, nor forgive any slip, nor conceal you if you are exposed. They will hold you to account for every tiny trifle, and envy you whether you have much or little. They will incite others against

you with tale-bearing, exaggeration, and slander. When pleased, they are all flattery on the outside; when displeased, they are filled with fury within. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

That is my verdict based on what I have witnessed from most of them, except for the few whom God Most High protects. Keeping their company results only in loss and deprivation. And that is true of those of them who pretend to show you friendship, to say nothing of those who are your open enemies! As Qāḍī Ibn Ma'rūf said, may God have mercy on him:

Beware once of your enemy,
And of your friend a thousand times.
A friend may turn against you, and
He knows best how to do you harm.

Abū Tammāmⁱⁱ said:

Your foe can make use of your friend,
So do not have too many friends;
You well know that most illnesses
Come from your food or from your drink.

Do as Hilāl ibn al-'Alā' al-Raqqīⁱⁱⁱ said:

When I forgave all and had hatred for none,
I relieved myself of enmity's cares.
I greet my enemy when I see him
To ward off evil with kind greetings.
I act as though cheerful with one I detest,

i A jurist and poet of Baghdad (d. 381/991).

ii The court poet of the Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (d. 332/943).

iii A Syrian hadith narrator and poet (d. 280/893).

As though seeing him filled my heart with joy.
 I cannot be safe from those I do not know,
 So how can I be safe from those whom I love?
 People are a disease; the cure is to leave them,
 But harshness with them would break brotherly ties,
 Keep the peace, and be safe from the harm they can do;
 And show yourself eager to earn their affection.
 Treat people well; bear with the trials they bring,
 Though they be deaf, dumb, blind, and duplicitous.

Do also as one of the wise said: "Meet friend and foe alike with a cheerful face, showing them neither servility nor reverence. Be dignified without pride, humble without servility." Seek the middle way in all your affairs, for it is extremes that are blameworthy. As a poet said:

You must keep to the middle, for that is the way
 That leads to the straight and upright path.
 Be neither excessive nor negligent;
 Blameworthiness lies at either extreme.

Do not be continually looking from side to side or behind you. Do not stand at the edges of gatherings. If you join one and sit down, do not fidget. Avoid interlacing your fingers, playing with your beard or ring, picking your teeth or nose, excessively spitting or clearing your throat, waving flies from your face, stretching, or yawning, whether in people's faces or in prayer. Sit calmly and speak coherently. Listen to the pleasant things that others say to you, without expressing excessive amusement or asking them to repeat themselves. Refrain from joking or storytelling. Do not talk about how pleased you are with your children, your poetry, your writing, or other things to do with you. As a man, do not make as

much effort with your appearance as women do, but do not be as plain as a slave. Avoid using too much kohl or oil. Do not make excessive entreaties about your needs. Do not encourage anyone to do anything unjust.

Do not let anyone know your exact financial status, even your wife or child. If they see that you have little, they will despise you; and even if they see you have a lot, they will still not be satisfied with you. Be aloof with them without being cruel, and be gentle with them without being weak. Do not joke around with your slave, whether male or female, or they will lose respect for you.

If you get into a disagreement, remain calm and do not be foolish or hasty. Consider your arguments. Do not gesture excessively with your hands. Do not look around behind you or lean forward on your knees. Speak only after your anger subsides. If the ruler invites you for an audience, be on a knife's edge in his presence.

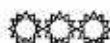
Beware the fair-weather friend, for he is the worst of all enemies. Never value your wealth more highly than your honor.

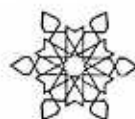


Young man, this ought to be enough for you as a Beginning of Guidance, so try it out for yourself. It covers three parts: acts of obedience to God, avoidance of sin, and mixing with other people. This comprises all of one's dealings with the Creator and creation. If you deem it suitable for you and find your heart inclining toward it and desiring to implement it, know that you are a servant whose heart God Most High has illuminated and whose breast He has expanded with faith. Realize for certain that this beginning has an end and a limit, and that beyond it lie other mysteries, profundities, modes of knowledge, and mystical revelations. I have set them down in my book *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, so make it your business to acquire it.

You may find that your soul considers the practice of these daily observances too burdensome and disavows this branch of knowledge, saying, "What use will this be in the gatherings of the learned? When will it ever elevate you in the sight of your associates and peers? How can it raise your standing in the assemblies of high officials and ministers? Will it help you to obtain connections, wealth, control over charitable foundations, or a position in the judiciary?" In that case, know that Satan has deluded you and induced you to forget your final destiny and your ultimate abode. Go and find a devil like yourself to teach you whatever you suppose will benefit you and help you reach your desired objective! But know that you will never attain any untroubled control in your own neighborhood, much less in your town or province—and what is more, you will lose out on enduring dominion and everlasting bliss in proximity to the Lord of the Worlds.

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you. Praise be to God first and last, outwardly and inwardly. There is no strength or power save through God, the Sublime, the Majestic. May God bless our master Muḥammad and his Family and Companions, and grant them peace.





COUNSELS TO A DEAR BROTHER

Al-Risāla al-waʿziyya



*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

A LETTER FROM IMAM ABŪ ḤĀMID
AL-GHAZĀLĪ TO SHAYKH ABŪL-FATH
AḤMAD IBN SALĀMA AL-DIMAMĪⁱ

A trusted colleague of mine has told me enough about you, dear shaykh, imam, and ascetic—may God grace you with success and use you for the cause of His religion—to make me strongly desire to become your brother for the sake of God Most High, in the hope of what God has promised to those of His servants who love one another. This brotherhood does not require that we meet in person and be physically close to one another; it is a kinship of hearts and a meeting of spirits. "Spirits are mustered troops; when they recognize one another, they bond" (Bukhārī 3336). I offer to you the bond of brotherhood for the sake of God Most High, and accordingly I request that you not omit me from your prayers in your moments of seclusion, and that you ask God to show me truth as truth and grant that I follow it, and to show me

i The name is given variously as Damamī, Dimimī, Dimamī, Dimammī, and perhaps others, after an ancient village near Fallūja in Iraq with similarly uncertain spelling. The translator has not been able to find any information about Shaykh Abūl-Fath.

falsehood as falsehood and grant that I avoid it. My colleague also told me that you have requested that I offer you some advice and counsel regarding the doctrinal principles that every accountable person must believe in.

Now as for counsel, I do not consider myself fit to offer it. If one is to offer advice, one must be prepared to "pay the zakat that is due upon it" by practicing what one preaches, and I fear that I may not be able to afford such a price. How can one devoid of light possibly provide illumination for others? A crooked staff cannot cast a straight shadow. God Almighty revealed to Jesus son of Mary ﷺ, "Counsel yourself. If you heed it, you may counsel others. If not, then be ashamed before Me."ⁱ Our own Prophet ﷺ said, "I have left among you two counselors—one speaking, the other silent. The speaking one is the Qur'ān, and the silent one is death."ⁱⁱ The two of these ought to be enough for anyone who seeks counsel; and if a man does not heed them, how can he offer counsel to others? I presented them to my soul, and it assented and accepted them verbally and rationally—but then refused to apply them with action and realization. I said to myself, "Do you not believe that the Qur'ān is the eloquent counselor, the honest counselor? For it is the Word of God, which falsehood cannot approach from in front or from behind." My soul replied, "Indeed I do."

I reminded my soul that God Almighty says, *Whosoever desires the present life and its adornment, We shall repay them there in full for their good deeds, and therein they shall not be defrauded. They are those who shall have nothing in the Hereafter but Hell-Fire. All that they wrought in their worldly lives shall come to nothing, and all that they used to do will be in vain* (Qur'ān 11:15–16). I told myself: "God has promised you Hell if you desire the present

i *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, 2/382.

ii There is apparently no source for this hadith, although there are several hadiths in a similar spirit.

life, and the present life means anything that will not accompany you after death. But have you given up your desire and love for the world? If a Christian physician told you that you would die or become ill if you ate the most delicious food, you would run a mile from it, and you would vomit it out if you had eaten it already. Do you, then, trust this Christian more than God Almighty? If you do, you must be an unbeliever. Or it is that Hell is less worrisome to you than sickness? If it is, you must be a fool." My soul assented to this, but that did not do any good; it continued to incline towards immediate gratification.

I then addressed my soul through the silent counselor. I said: "The speaking counselor informed you of the silent one, saying, *The death from which you flee will surely meet you, and then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He will inform you of what you used to do* (Qur'ān 62:8)." I told it, "Yet here you are, reaching for immediate gratification again! Do you not believe that death is inescapable, and that it will wrest from you all that you cling to and snatch away all that you covet? Do you not understand that what is approaching is near, and that what is remote will never arrive? God Almighty says, *Consider, then: were We to grant them enjoyment for years, and then there came upon them what they were promised, how would the enjoyment they were given avail them?* (Qur'ān 26:205-207). Can you escape this fate in spite of all the things you are immersed in? A wise and free man would leave the world of his own accord without having to be dragged out. A base man clings to it until he is expelled in failure, loss, and woe."

My soul replied, "You are right." Yet those were hollow words, for it made no effort at all to prepare for the Hereafter with the same earnestness with which it arranged its immediate interests; and it did not strive to please God Most High with the same earnestness with which it strove to please itself or to curry favor with

others. Nor did it feel as much shame before God as it did before any human. It made no preparations for the Hereafter, though it was careful to prepare for summer even at the onset of winter, not waiting until the heat was at its doorstep before beginning to gather all that it needed to endure it. Yet death might have come for it even before winter arrived, while it is certain that there is no way to imagine anything snatching it away from the clutches of the Hereafter.

I asked my soul, "Do you not prepare for summer, knowing how long it will last, and procure the things you need to endure its heat?" It replied, "I do." I said, "Then you should not disobey God any more than you imagine you will be able to endure Hell, and you should make preparations for the Hereafter that will last you as long as it lasts." My soul replied, "Only a fool would disagree." But it did not change its ways, and I found myself recalling what a wise man once said: "A man can be so stubborn that even if half of him died, the other half would not come to its senses." I could not escape the realization that I was just such a man.

When I saw that my soul would persist in its wicked ways and pay no heed to the counsels of death and the Qur'ān, I decided that the best thing to do was discover the reason why it persisted even after confessing its guilt and acknowledging the truth, which seemed a most peculiar thing. After examining it at length, I finally uncovered the reason. This is a matter of great importance, for it is the deadliest disease and the root cause of delusion and heedlessness. Simply put, it is the belief that death is something far-off, and reluctance to accept that it may strike at any moment. If someone were to be informed by a reliable source, in broad daylight, that he was to die that night, or in a week or a few months, he would immediately adopt the straight path and give up all of the things he had deluded himself into thinking he did for God Most High, as well as the things he well knew he did not do for His sake. It

would be apparent to him, for certain, that anyone who wakes up in the morning and expects to see the evening, or reaches the evening and expects to see the next morning, is guilty of indolence and procrastination, and his efforts are doomed to be feeble.

I therefore advise both my dear brother and myself to heed the counsel of the Messenger of God ﷺ, who said, "Pray each prayer as if it were your last" (Ibn Mājah 4174). He was granted the gift of saying much in few words, and of saying all that needed to be said; and there is no better counsel than this. A person whose heart is convinced that each prayer he prays will be his last will be absolutely attentive to his prayer, and will find it easy to be ready to die after the prayer. Anyone unable to do so will remain in perpetual obliviousness and delusion, procrastinating until death comes and it is too late. I ask my brother to pray to God to grant me this rank, for though I seek it I always fall short of it. I advise him to accept nothing but the same for himself, and to beware of the traps of delusion. If your soul promises you that it will do so, demand from it a binding covenant before God Most High; for the soul's trickery can outwit all but the shrewdest people.



You also asked about the minimum by way of articles of faith in which every accountable person must believe. All of this is summed up in the words, "There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God." Then if one believes in the Messenger, one must believe in all that he taught regarding the Attributes of God, Exalted is He: that He is Ever-Living, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Speaking, Willing, and that *nothing is like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing* (Qur'ān 42:11). One is not required to investigate the true nature of these Attributes, or the question of whether His Speech, Knowledge and so on are

eternal or temporal, and other such matters. Indeed, one may give no thought whatsoever to these questions until one died, and still die as a true believer. Nor is one required to learn the rational proofs of which theologians have written. Anybody who believes the truth in his heart with pure faith, regardless of arguments and proofs, is a true believer. The Messenger of God ﷺ did not require any more than that, and this basic doctrine remained the creed of rural folk and the masses, except for those who found themselves in a place where they heard such matters discussed as the nature of God's Word, the meaning of His settling and descent, and so on. If these notions do not take hold of a person's heart and he is content to go on with his worship and his work, that is good. If they do come to preoccupy his heart, then at bare minimum he must believe what the early Muslims did, which is that the Qur'ān is the eternal uncreated Word of God, and that His settling upon the Throne is real; but to ask of it unnecessarily is heresy, and the "how" of it is unknowable. He must believe in all that Revelation teaches with simple faith, without investigating its true nature and manner.

If this does not help and his heart remains confused and uncertain, he should resort to theological explanations —ones that are easy to grasp, even if they are not deemed strong or fully satisfactory by theologians. There is no need to delve into these arguments, and indeed it is better to settle one's confusions without doing so, for the arguments cannot be examined closely without probing deeply into the questions they are meant to answer. This can sometimes confuse the heart and overburden the mind, because the problem may be easier to grasp than the solution. This is why the early Muslims cautioned against the in-depth study and investigation of theological matters by laymen of weak understanding. Those who are engrossed in the examination of the true nature of things are able to delve into these murky waters, but the masses are to

be kept away from theology just as children are kept away from going near the banks of the Tigris river lest they fall in and drown; permission to engage in it is restricted to those of strong intellectual capacity, just as only strong swimmers have permission. Yet even then there is great risk of delusion and error, for many a weak-minded person is fully satisfied that God Most High has given him a strong mind, and thinks himself capable of grasping the true nature of anything. Such a person might dive in and sink into an fathomless ocean without realizing it. What is best for almost all people, except for a few rare cases—one or two in every age—is to follow the way of the early Muslims: faith in the Messengers and general belief in what God Almighty sent down and what His Messenger taught, without going into rational proofs. The quest for God-consciousness is what matters, which is why when the Prophet ﷺ found his Companions engaging in such a discussion, he remonstrated: "Is this what you have been ordered to do: to wield the words of the Book of God like weapons against one another? Look to what God has commanded you to do, and do it; and look to what He has forbidden you, and keep away from it."ⁱ

This, then, is our counsel of direction toward the path of truth. We have expressed it in more detail in the Book "On the Foundations of Doctrine,"ⁱ so it may be sought there. Peace!



i Book Two of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.





GOOD CONDUCT AND
MANNERS IN ISLAM

Al-Adab fī al-dīn





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

Author's Introduction

Praise be to God, Who created us and perfected our creation; Who trained us, and trained us in good conduct; and Who honored us, and honored us greatly, with His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

I say—and enabling grace is from God alone—that the most perfect and sublime characteristic, and the greatest of all deeds, is good conduct in religion. For the believer, to have good conduct means to emulate the actions of the Lord of the Universe and the character traits of the Prophets and Messengers. God Most High, taught us good conduct in the Qur'ān, as did His Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in the Sunna, for which thanks are due to Him. So did the Companions and Followers and those after them who provided us with fine examples of good conduct to emulate. This is of great importance and has many aspects—of which we shall mention only some, to avoid being prolix and difficult to understand.

Good Conduct Before Almighty God

The proper conduct that a believer ought to have with God is to lower one's gaze and be quiet, calm, and collected. It is to be eager to obey God's commandments and heed His prohibitions. It is to rarely object to anything, and to maintain a pleasant character. It

is to engage in constant remembrance and high-minded thought. It is restraint in the limbs, serenity in the heart, and reverence for the Lord. It is to refrain from becoming angry, and to keep one's love secret. It is to always be sincere, and refrain from judging others. It is to always prefer the truth, and to trust in God rather than His creatures. It is to act sincerely and speak truthfully. It is to abandon idle curiosity, and instead fill one's free time with devotion to God. It is to give few indications, and to keep one's counsel. It is to be zealous in safeguarding one's own good name. It is to save one's anger for when God's bounds are transgressed. It is to maintain a constant sense of awe, modesty, and fear. It is to be serene, trusting in one's destiny; completely reliant upon God, knowing that whatever He chooses is best. It is to perform proper ablutions even when it is difficult, and after each prayer to await the next one. It is for the heart to tremble in fear of missing the time for an obligatory prayer. It is always to repent, in fear lest one persist in sin. It is to have constant belief in the reality of the Unseen. It is for the heart to quake when remembering God, and for one's spiritual lights to increase when one is admonished. It is to place total reliance upon God in times of neediness, and to give charity without stint when able to.

The Good Conduct of the Teacher

The teacher must maintain his knowledge and act upon it. He must always be dignified, but never proud or pretentious. He must be gentle with his pupils, and patient with those who are ill-mannered. He must explain things well to those who have difficulty in understanding. He must be humble enough to admit when he does not know something. When answering a question, his primary concern should be to do right by the questioner and satisfy him. He must refrain from posturing. He must listen to arguments and

accept them if they are convincing, even when they come from an opponent in debate.

Pupils' Good Conduct With Their Teacher

The pupil must greet the teacher first. He must refrain from speaking too much in his presence, and stand for him when he stands. He must not say to him, "So-and-so said something different than what you said." He must not ask questions of anyone but him when in his gathering. He should not smile when addressing him. He must not imply by gesturing that he disagrees with him. He must not tug on his clothing to hold him back when he gets up to leave, or bother him in the street with questions all the way home, or keep at him when he is tired.

Good Conduct When Teaching Qur'ān Recitation

The teacher must sit in a reverential manner. He must pay heed to the Divine commandments, listen with understanding, be expectant of God's mercy, and listen attentively to allegorical passages. He must point out the pausing-places and explain how to begin, the pronunciation of *hamza*, the varying lengths of vowels, the correct enunciation of each letter, and the benefit of completing (*khatm*) the whole of the Qur'ān.

He should be gentle with beginners. If a pupil is absent from a lesson he should ask after him, and encourage him the next time he attends. He should refrain from mundane conversation. With beginners, he should first ensure that they know enough of the Qur'ān to perform their prayers alone, or to lead others in prayer if required to.

Good Conduct When Studying the Qur'ān

The pupil must sit before his teacher humbly, maintain full concentration, and lower his head. He must ask permission before reciting, say the *Isti'ādha* and *Basmala* before beginning,ⁱ and supplicate when he has finished.

Good Conduct When Teaching Young Children

The teacher must begin by rectifying himself, for their eyes and ears are turned to him and they will follow his example, for good or ill. He should keep silence in his classroom and maintain a stern gaze. He should discipline the children mostly by frightening them, and only rarely resort to corporal punishment. He should not engage them in casual conversation, for that would only make them lose respect for him. Nor should he let them talk among themselves, or they will become too casual in his presence. He should not joke with anyone in their presence. He should keep himself aloof from the things they give to him. He should prevent them from becoming boisterous or inquisitive. He should make them see the vileness of backbiting, lying, and tale-bearing. He should not ask them about anything that may be amiss with them, lest they overburden him; nor ask too much of their families, lest they find him tiresome. He must teach them about ritual purity and prayer, and tell them about the kinds of impurities that can affect them.

i Before reciting from the Qur'ān one must say *A'ūdhu bi-Llāh min al-Shayṭān al-rajīm* ('I seek refuge with God from Satan the outcast'), and then *Bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* ('In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful'). These formulas too are expected to be pronounced according to the rules of recitation.

Good Conduct When Narrating Hadiths

The narrator must strive to tell the truth and avoid untruths, and relate only what is well-known and transmitted on the authority of trusted narrators. He should omit narrations that have been discarded (owing to faults in a narrator), and avoid discussions of the disputes that took place among the early Muslims. He must be aware of the times in which he lives. He must strive to avoid errors, whether written or spoken, lest the text he narrates become corrupted. He must avoid levity and controversy. He must give thanks for his blessings, for he has been placed in the position of conveying the message from the Messenger ﷺ. He must always be humble. He should ensure that most of what he narrates is of benefit to the Muslims regarding obligations, *sunnas*, and good conduct according to the spirit of the Qur'ān. He should not take his knowledge to politicians or rulers, for that would only taint it. He should not narrate things he does not understand. He must not allow any narrations to be read under his tutelage that he has not collected himself, nor transmit such narrations if they are read to him. He must be careful not to mix up the texts of hadiths.

Good Conduct When Studying Hadiths

The hadith student should write down well-known narrations rather than rare ones, and avoid condemned ones. He should write down narrations that have been transmitted by trusted narrators. The fact that a certain hadith is well-known should not lead him to neglect a related one. He must not let his study of hadiths distract him from his manly duties or his prayer. He must avoid backbiting. He must listen carefully and be silent when with his teacher. When copying a hadith, he must check his copy very thoroughly. He must not use the expression "I heard" when narrating unless he actually

heard the narration firsthand. He must not allow desire for the shortest chain possibleⁱ to impel him to write a hadith from an untrustworthy narrator. He must take his hadiths from religious men who are learned in the hadith sciences, not from those who are not—even if they are righteous.

The Good Conduct of a Secretary

A secretary must have good penmanship and write clearly and legibly. He must be schooled in arithmetic, and have a good head on his shoulders. He should dress well and use perfume. He should be aware of the latest political developments, and fearful of rivalries over position. He should be educated regarding taxation. He should be tolerant and experienced regarding financial matters. He must avoid being disorganized. He must keep clear of any suspicion of unlawful activity. He must be magnanimous, pleasant, and dignified. When in company, he must refrain from lewd talk and shun jesting, gossip, and feigned affability.

Good Conduct When Preaching

A preacher must never be proud, but always feel shame before his Lord and show his neediness toward his Creator. He must desire to bring benefit to his audience. He must strive to recognize his own faults, while looking upon his audience with indulgence and having the best opinion of their inward piety. He must maintain his self-respect by not expecting anything from them. He must admonish gently and be kind to beginners. He must be firmly

i It is regarded as desirable that the chain of transmission of any Islamic text one studies be short, meaning that there be as few intermediary narrators as possible between one's teacher (or informant) and the Prophet ﷺ.

committed to practicing what he preaches, so that people may benefit from what he says.

Good Conduct When Being Preached To

The preacher's audience must be outwardly humble and contrite. They must be well disposed towards him, think the best of him, and believe what he says. They must remain silent and minimize any fidgeting. They must concentrate on what he says, avoiding suspiciousness.

The Good Conduct of the Devotee

A devotee must know what to do with his time, and keep to his litanies. He must speak little and weep much. He must always be humble and reverent. He must lower his gaze and keep a close watch upon his heart. He must contemplate his faith and be vigilant from moment to moment. He must fast by day and worship through the night. He must live in humble lodgings and eat modest meals. He must always be expecting death. He must keep aloof from his peers, deny his appetites, and faithfully observe his prayers. He must be aware of how his spiritual state waxes and wanes. He does not need to know anything besides that.

The Good Conduct of Self-Isolation

Anyone who lives in isolation must be educated in religious matters so that he knows how to pray, fast, pay zakat, and perform the pilgrimage. When isolating himself from others, his intention must be to save them from his own evil. He should attend congregational prayers and funerals and visit the sick, but refrain from conversing with people or asking anything about them that is likely to taint

his heart. He should not expect to gain anything from them, so that he has no need of his neighbors. He should divide his time between three things: prayer, study, and sleep. That way, he will always either be profiting, learning, or keeping safe. He must devote himself to remembrance of God and give much thanks, so that his quest may be completed. If he lives with family, he may converse with them. He must strive his utmost while in retreat, so that he may see the worth of his isolation.

The Good Conduct of the Sufi

The Sufi must refrain from ecstatic allusions and outrageous utterances, and must hold to knowledge of the Law. He must always engage in spiritual struggle. He should take no comfort in other people, nor retain any desires where clothing is concerned, though he should take care of his appearance. He must rely only upon God. He must opt for poverty and constant remembrance. He must conceal his love. He should be amiable when in company, but avoid the company of women and children. He must always be studying the Qur'ān.

The Good Conduct of a Nobleman

A nobleman must maintain his nobility, and not use it as a means of earning his livelihood, or wield his lineage as a cudgel. His intent should be to lower himself before his Lord and fear his Master. He must treat his inferiors generously, and defer to his equals. He should acknowledge the merit of the learned, even if his own education equals or surpasses theirs. He should keep the company of religious men, knowledgeable in jurisprudence and the Qur'ān. He should refine his character, and choose his words carefully when angry or when delivering an address. He should be

benevolent to those he sits with, dutiful to his brothers, kindly to his relatives, helpful to his neighbors, and generous to his friends.

The Good Conduct of Sleeping

Perform ablutions before sleeping, and lie down on your right side and invoke God, Almighty and Glorious is He, until you fall asleep. Upon waking, supplicate and praise God Most High.

The Good Conduct of *Tahajjud* (Voluntary Night Prayer)

Eat and drink little beforehand, and live righteously throughout the day by refraining from backbiting, lying, and frivolous speech, and lowering one's gaze. When arising from sleep to pray *tahajjud*, summon up a sense of fear and alarm, then perform a thorough ablution. Reflect upon the dominion of the heavens, supplicate, and maintain presence of mind in the prayer in order to understand what you are reciting.

Good Conduct When Using The Lavatory

Before going in, say the *Basmala* and *Isti'ādha*.ⁱ Gently lift your clothing as you near the ground. After cleaning yourself afterwards, wipe the [left] hand with earth as well as water. Cover yourself properly before going out, and give thanks and praise to God after leaving.

Good Conduct in the Bathhouse

In the bathhouse, cover your private parts and refraining from

i See the footnote on p. [116].

looking at those of others. Try to be alone, and not look around or speak to anyone, even to greet them. One should not stay for very long. Cleanse yourself of any impurities before going in, and wash your feet with cold water on the way out to avoid getting a headache.

Good Conduct When Performing Ablutions

Use the tooth-stick and invoke continuously while washing, maintaining a sense of awe before the One you are seeking to please, and the intention to repent of your past misdeeds. After ablutions, remain silent until the prayer begins. Related aspects of conduct and etiquette include renewing ablutions as soon as they are vitiated, trimming the moustache, plucking the armpits, shaving the pubic region, trimming the fingernails, circumcision, washing the parts of the body where dirt accumulates, rinsing out the nose, and keeping one's clothing and body clean in general.

Good Conduct When Entering the Mosque

Enter with the right foot first, after ensuring that your shoes are clean. Invoke the Name of God and greet those inside. If the mosque is empty, one should still say a greeting for oneself. Ask God to open the doors of His mercy, then sit quietly and vigilantly facing the Qibla. Keep any conversation to a minimum and do not argue, raise your voice, or draw your sword. Do not engage in any worldly activity, ask around for your lost property, buy or sell, or hold meetings. When leaving, step out with the left foot first, and ask God Most High for whatever of His bounty He may give.

The Good Conduct of Retreat in the Mosque (*I'tikāf*)ⁱ

During a retreat one must engage in constant remembrance and concentration, and refrain from conversation. Stay in one spot, and do not move around. Restrain your soul from its desires, deny it its comforts, and compel it to obey God, Mighty and Majestic is He.

The Good Conduct of the Call to Prayer

A muezzin must know the proper times for prayer all the year round. He must lower his eyes while climbing the minaret, and turn to either side as he calls "Hasten to prayer" and "Hasten to success." He should draw out the words of the *azan* but deliver the *iqāma* rapidly.

The Good Conduct of the Imam

An imam must know the rules of the prayer and its obligatory and *sunna* elements, as well as how to deal with issues that may arise during it, and whether or not they render it invalid. He should not lead people in prayer who do not approve of him as their imam. He should ensure that he has learned people beside him. He should tell the congregation to make sure that the rows are straight, and gesture to them gently.

He should not select such lengthy passages of the Qur'ān to recite that the congregation becomes weary from standing for so long, nor so short that the prayer is lacking. In this regard he

i *I'tikāf* generally entails spending at least one entire night and day in the mosque in isolation for the purpose of intensive worship. However, according to the Shāfi'i *madhhab* (school of law), which Imam Ghazālī followed, one may spend even a few minutes at a time in a mosque with the intention of *i'tikāf*.

should use the weakest members of the congregation as his yardstick. He should be measured with his bows and prostrations, so that the congregation can follow him without having to rush to keep up. Likewise, he should pause for a moment before and after the Fātiḥa and again after the Sūra.

If while bowing he hears latecomers arriving, he should wait a moment before rising, to allow them to join before they miss the *rak'a*, but not so long that he inconveniences the rest of the congregation. If he notices before beginning the prayer that some regulars are absent, he may wait a moment for them to arrive, as long as the prayer is not delayed beyond its proper time. He should pause briefly between the two *salāms*. After the prayer, he should look to God's concealment of faults and to His favor, and give thanks to his Lord and maintain remembrance of Him in every state.

Good Conduct During Prayer

Lower yourself in humility and contrition, maintain presence of heart, and banish satanic whisperings from your mind. Refrain from any outward or inward motion, keeping your body still and your eyes lowered, with the right hand over the left. Reflect upon the Qur'ān as it is recited, say the *takbīr* with awe, bow with humility, prostrate with reverence, glorify with devotion, recite the *tashahhud* as one who is truly bearing witness, say the *salām* with apprehension, depart fearfully, and strive to seek God's approval.ⁱ

i *Takbīr* means saying 'Allāh akbar' to begin the prayer; *tashahhud*, testifying that there is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is His Envoy; *salām*, concluding the prayer by greeting the angels and one's fellow-worshippers. Apprehension, fear, and striving to seek God's approval all have to do with God-consciousness and the fact that the worshiper can never know for certain that God has accepted his prayers—or other acts of worship.

Good Conduct When Reciting

When reciting, maintain dignity and modesty, abstain from frivolity and foul language, and recite with humility and weeping.

Good Conduct When Supplicating

When supplicating one must have a reverent heart and maintain concentration, humility, optimism, and contrition. Plead with God as though you were starving or drowning. Recognize your own worthlessness and the immense and holy Might of the One of Whom you are asking. Beg intently with hands outstretched, feeling certain that you will be answered yet fearful that you might be denied. Await relief, refrain from enmity, and be sincere in your intention and your resorting to God. After supplicating, put your palms to your face.

Good Conduct on Friday

Prepare for the Friday prayer before its time comes, and perform ablutions early and with time to spare. Wash your whole body, and wear clean clothes and perfume. Head out with the intention to seek knowledge, and walk with dignity and serenity, taking short steps and keeping your gaze lowered. Enter the mosque reverently, and do not step over people. Return people's greetings, but without engaging in conversation. Devote yourself to remembrance of God, and give thanks to your Provider. Try to sit near the imam, and listen attentively to the sermon. Refrain from interlacing your fingers. Do not begin a voluntary prayer if the imam has already sat down on the pulpit. Return his greeting once he has given the signal. Keep silent, and open your heart to receive the sermon. Do not look around while the imam is speaking. Do not stand up for

the prayer until the imam has come down from the pulpit and the muezzin has finished calling the *iqāma*.

Good Conduct When Delivering the Sermon

The imam should walk to the mosque with dignity and serenity. He should pray the greeting prayer (*tabiyya*) after entering, and then sit reverently awaiting the time to begin without engaging in conversation. He should walk to the pulpit with dignity, as though he were ready to deliver his address to God Himself, and then ascend the pulpit humbly, invoking God all the while. He should turn to his audience with presence of mind, and greet them with a gesture of peace so that they know he is about to speak. Then he should sit for the azan, fearfully conscious of the Divine Judge. Then he should deliver the sermon humbly, without pointing his fingers. He must truly believe in what he is saying, and hope to benefit from it. Then he should indicate to the congregation to supplicate, and come down from the pulpit when the muezzin begins the *iqāma*. He should not say the initiatory *takbīr* until the congregation are settled; then he should begin the prayer, reciting at a measured pace.

The Good Conduct of the Eid Festivals

Spend the night before Eid in prayer, and in the morning perform a major ablution, wash your body, and apply perfume. Keep repeating the *takbīr* as well as the *tasbīh* and *ḥamd*,ⁱ and maintain an attitude of reverence. Listen attentively to the sermon after the prayer. If it is the Eid of *Fiṭr* (after Ramaḍān), eat a light breakfast

i Saying *Allāh Akbar* ('God is Greatest'), *Subḥān Allāh* ('Glory be to God'), and *al-Ḥamd li-Llāh* ('Praise be to God')

before going out to pray. Take different routes to and from the prayer, and depart from it with feelings of concern from fear of lapsing into backbiting.

Good Conduct During an Eclipse

During an eclipse, maintain an attitude of alarm and fear, hasten to repent, and avoid being apathetic. Make your way to the prayer quickly, stand at length during it, and feel apprehensive.

Good Conduct When Praying for Rain

Before the prayer for rain, fast, repent, and return any ill-gotten gains. Muster your spiritual resolve and remove any elegant clothing or prideful attitudes. Bathe before heading out. Remain silent and reflect on what you may have done to deserve this punishment, and confess your sins and resolve never to repeat them. Listen attentively to the sermon, say glorifications between the *takbirs*, repeat many petitions for forgiveness, and turn your shawl or cloak inside out while supplicating.

Good Conduct When One Is Ill

At times of illness, remember death often and prepare for it with repentance. Give praise to God constantly and humbly entreat Him, displaying your helplessness and neediness before Him. Seek the cure from the Creator of all cures, and give thanks to Him upon recovery. Do not complain too much. Honor your visitors, but refrain from shaking their hands.

Good Conduct When Consoling the Bereaved

Be humble and mournful, say little; and refrain from smiling, because that might lead to bad feelings.

Good Conduct When Walking in a Funeral Procession

Remain humble, lower your gaze, and refrain from speaking. Reflect upon the deceased, and contemplate what responses he may give to the questions he will be asked in the grave. Resolve to put those things right in your own case while you still can, for fear of bitter regret should your own death intervene and prevent it.

Good Conduct When Giving Charity

It is better to give before being asked, and to give discreetly and keep it secret afterwards. Be kind to the beggar and do not reject him before he has even asked. Answer him with a whisper, and do not allow yourself to be stingy. Give him what he asks for, or at least give him a kindly answer. Should your enemy Satan, may God curse him, suggest to you that the beggar is not deserving of charity because God has already blessed him enough, pay no regard to this; he does indeed have a right to it.

Good Conduct When Begging

The beggar should make his neediness known truthfully, and speak gently when he asks. He should accept whatever he is given gratefully, even if it be a little, and pray for the giver. If someone refuses him, he should accept their excuse gracefully and not importune them repeatedly.

Good Conduct for the Wealthy

A rich man should remain humble and not let himself become proud. He must always be grateful and engaged in righteous actions. He should be friendly and welcoming to the poor. He should return greetings to anyone who extends them. He should be content, kind, and amiable, and donate to good causes.

Good Conduct for the Poor

The poor man should always be content with what he has, conceal his poverty, and avoid undignified behavior or groveling. He should renounce greed and prefer to be safe than to be sated. In the company of generous and religious men, he should act as though not in any need. He should respect the rich but not rejoice in their presence; and he should hide his neediness from them and have no expectations of them. He should be neither proud nor obsequious towards them. Whenever he sees or is with them, he should guard his heart and keep a tight hold on his religion.

Good Conduct When Giving a Gift

The giver should act as if the pleasure of the gift were all his, and express delight when the receiver accepts it. He should be grateful when he sees the recipient, and consider the gift as little, even if it be much.

Good Conduct When Receiving a Gift

The recipient should express delight in the gift, even if it be something small. Supplicate for the giver if he is absent, and thank him warmly if he is present. Reciprocate the gift if able to, even if only

in words. Praise the giver, but without being obsequious, lest your faith be undermined. Do not entertain hopes of receiving further gifts from him.

Good Conduct When Doing Someone a Favor

If you sees that your help is needed, give it without waiting to be asked. Be quick to keep your promise, and give whatever you promised to give. Once the other person has accepted it, keep it secret and do not remind him of it. [If it is a continual type of favor,] be sure to keep doing it, and be careful not to stop.

Good Conduct When Fasting

Refrain from arguing, backbiting, lying, and causing harm; restrain your limbs from repugnant actions; and break the fast only with goodly and lawful food.

Good Conduct on the Way to the Pilgrimage

On the journey to the Pilgrimage, pay your way gladly and be kind to the porters, and assist your companions, especially those who are having a difficult journey. Share your provisions readily, and be pleasant, polite, and good-humored as long as you do not cross the boundary into sin. In all things be moderate. Be pleased to see your travelling companions, listen attentively when they speak, refrain from arguing when they complain, overlook their faults, thank them for their help, give them preference over yourself, and assist them.

Good Conduct When Entering Consecration (*Ihrām*)
[For Pilgrimage]

Before entering consecration, perform a major ablution, clean your clothes, apply perfume, and feed the hungry. Say the *talbiya*ⁱ with reverence, raising your voice joyfully in answer to God's summons. When circumambulating [the Ka'ba], be aware of the tremendous sanctity of the rite. When hastening between Ṣafā and Marwa, seek God's approval. When standing at 'Arafa, imagine how it will be to stand at the Resurrection. At Muzdalifa, bear witness to the divine mercy. When your head is shaved, feel as if freed from captivity. See the sacrifice as an expiation for sin, and the stoning [of the Pillars] as a return to obedience. Perform the *ifāda* circumambulationⁱⁱ as though you were passing over the Bridge to Paradise. Feel sorrow upon departing [from Mecca], and a longing to return.

Good Conduct When Entering Mecca

After entering the Sacred Precinct, maintain a constant sense of reverence and repentance, and look upon the Ka'ba with awe, and the Sacred Mosque with deference. Commemorate the occasion by invoking *Allāhu akbar* and *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*. Circumambulate wherever possible, and perform 'Umra together with the Hajj.

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- i The *talbiya* is the customary call for pilgrims to make both during and before the rituals. It is so called because it begins with the words *Labbayka Allāhumma labbayk* ("Here I am, dear God, at Your service").
 - ii *Tawāf al-ifāda* is the circumambulation of the Ka'ba to be performed soon after the central rites of *Hajj*, apart from the stoning of the Pillars, have been completed.

The Good Conduct of the Trader

A trader should not set up shop in the street so that he blocks the way for his fellow Muslims. His assistant should be an intelligent, honest youth who will not give short measure. He should instruct his assistant to weigh carefully and favor the customer rather than himself, and use a sensitive and well-balanced scale for all that he deals in. He should begin each day by cleaning his scale and making sure all the weights are accurate. He should instruct his assistant to be especially careful when measuring out liquids. If his customer be a nobleman, he should honor him; if a neighbor, he should welcome him warmly; if a pauper, he should be merciful to him; and if any other, he should serve them honestly.

His sales will be determined by his prices: he will have more customers if he lowers them, and less if he raises them. Between customers, he should study the Qur'ān and keep his eyes away from women and young men. If any simpleton comes his way, he should sell his wares to him at a low price. He should not refuse beggars. If a trader does not have an assistant but works in his own shop, then all of the foregoing advice applies to him personally. He should purchase weights and measures from reputable sources. He should refrain from singing the praises of his wares when selling them, or criticizing them when buying them. He should always give truthful information, and be careful not to use foul language when bargaining or to lie when in a conversation. He should keep idle marketplace chatter to a minimum, and do his best to avoid disputes.

The Good Conduct of the Money-Changer

A money-changer should strive for authenticity and honesty. He must avoid usury but may give short-term credit. He must weigh

carefully, and avoid duplicity and deceit. He must take great care to ensure that his measuring instruments are accurate.

The Good Conduct of the Artisan

The artisan must do honest work and strive for excellence. He must keep his promises and avoid delays, and not charge exorbitant prices.

Good Conduct When Eating

Wash your hands before and after eating. Say the *Basmala* beforehand. Eat using the right hand, and eat the food that is closest, taking small bites and chewing well. Do not look your dining companions in the face too often. Do not eat in a reclined position. Do not continue eating after your hunger is satiated. When you have had enough, excuse yourself so that others do not feel shy to eat more. Eat from the edge of the plate, not the middle. After eating, lick your fingers and praise God. Do not mention death during a meal, so as not to put others off their food.

Good Conduct When Drinking

Look into the cup before drinking from it. Say the *Basmala* beforehand, and praise God afterwards. Sip rather than gulp, taking three sips and breathing in between them. Avoid drinking while standing. If you have companions, pass the cup to the right.

Good Conduct for a Man Looking to Marry

A man looking for a wife should put piety first, then beauty and wealth if he so desires. He should not name conditions or harbor

ulterior motives. He should not propose marriage to a woman who has already received a proposal from a Muslim brother. He should send to represent him someone who does not lie—not to tell him tales, but to inform him about her person and her character. He should have him enquire into her devoutness and ensure that she prays regularly and keeps her fasts, that she is modest and has good hygiene, is well-spoken and does not use foul language, keeps to her home, and is dutiful to her parents. He should also inquire into the character and piety of her father and mother. Before the marriage is conducted, he should do no more than glance at her discreetly. Afterwards, he may look at her directly and speak beautiful words to her. He should not allow anything sinful to take place at his wedding. He should not arrange his home in a manner that allows outsiders to see into his private life. He should not kiss his wife in front of his family. When he sees that she wants something of him, he should speak first.

Good Conduct for a Woman Who Receives a Marriage Proposal

Upon receiving a proposal, a woman should have a family member of hers whom she trusts enquire as to the suitor's religiosity, doctrine, manliness, and truthfulness. She should look into his family and household, and find out if he prays regularly and attends the mosque, and if he is honest in his dealings and livelihood. She ought to desire piety in him more than wealth, and character more than renown. She should resolve to be content with him and obedient to him, for that will strengthen their bond and deepen their love for each other.

The Good Conduct of Sexual Relations

One should wear perfume, speak gently, show affection, kiss passionately, and express love. One should say the *Basmala* before. One should stay under covers and avoid looking at the genitals, for it causes blindness, and avoid facing the Qibla.

Good Conduct With One's Wife

A man should be a good companion to his wife, speak to her gently, and show her love. He should be relaxed and lighthearted when they are alone. He should overlook her faults and mistakes. He should preserve her honor and avoid arguing with her. He should give to her generously and ungrudgingly, and always keep his promises to her. He should honor and respect her family. He should guard her jealously.

Good Conduct With One's Husband

A woman should always be modest with her husband, and avoid arguing with him. She should obey him and be quiet when he is speaking. She should keep him in mind when he is away. She must not mispend his money. She should use perfume, keep her mouth fresh and her clothes clean, and maintain a beautiful appearance. She should be content with him and treat him compassionately. She should honor and respect his family and relatives. She should acknowledge his virtues and thank him for all that he does for her, express love for him when he is near, and show that she is happy to see him.

Good Conduct for Men

A man must attend the Friday and congregational prayers. He should keep his clothes clean and neat, and always use a tooth-stick. He should wear neither fashionable nor unfashionable clothing. He should not wear long garments to make a display of pride, nor short ones to make a display of poverty. He should not glance here and there to excess as he walks, nor should he look at women. He should not spit in the middle of a conversation. He should not make a habit of sitting by his doorway with his neighbors. He should avoid discussing his wife or domestic matters with other men.

Good Conduct for Women

A woman should keep to her home and sit in her room without getting up very often to listen in on her neighbors, nor to visit them except in case of necessity. She should keep her appearance pleasing for her husband, and keep him in mind when he is away. If she has to go out, she should keep a low profile and see to her business without delay, without so much as acknowledging any acquaintances she may come across. Her concern should be to rectify herself and manage the affairs of her household. She should be vigilant with her prayers and fasts. She should reflect on her flaws and contemplate her religion, stay quiet and lower her eyes, and be aware of her Lord and remember Him often. She should obey her husband and encourage him to seek a lawful livelihood, and not ask too much of him. She should be bashful and refrain from vulgarity. She should be patient, grateful, selfless, and supportive. If a friend of her husband's comes to the door when he is not home, she should not answer him at all, even to ask who is there, so jealously should she guard herself and her husband.

Good Conduct When at Someone's Door

Walk beside the wall and not face the door directly. Before knocking, say a *tasbiḥ* and *tahmid*.ⁱ After knocking, give a greeting of peace. Do not eavesdrop on the people inside the house. After giving a greeting, ask permission to enter. If no one answers, leave rather than waiting around. If asked "Who is there?" do not answer, "It is me," but identify yourself properly.

Good Conduct When Sitting by the Street

Keep your eyes down. Come to the aid of any victim of injustice, help the needy, and guide the lost. Respond to greetings, give to beggars, and refrain from looking around here and there. Enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong—gently at first, but then forcefully if need be. Do not listen to gossip—unless it be in order to investigate the truth—or spy on people, or think anything but good of them.

Good Conduct When in Company

Upon entering a gathering, greet those present and then sit down wherever a place is available without stepping over anyone. Direct your greeting to the people in the immediate vicinity when sitting. When tried with the misfortune of having to sit in a public assembly, avoid joining their conversation or listening to their nonsense, and ignore any foul language they may use. Try to avoid such gatherings except when necessary. But never disparage any human being, for therein lies ruin; and he may well be better and more obedient to God than you. Nor should you revere others on account of their

i See the footnote on p. [126].

worldly standing, since the world is minute in God's sight, as is everything it contains. Do not magnify the world in your estimation and venerate other people on account of it, for this will cause you to fall in God's estimation. You must not trade your religion away to them for the sake of worldly gain, or you will only fall in their estimation. Nor should you oppose them, for then you will become their enemy, which is too much to bear—unless it be enmity in God's cause. It is their evil deeds that you must oppose, while feeling compassion and mercy for them. Do not entertain hopes of winning their affection, good graces, approval, or praise. There is only a very slim chance of achieving this; moreover, that would only lead to God entrusting you to them, wherein lies destruction. You cannot expect that they will take your side in private the way they do in public; that can never be.

You must not covet what they possess, lest you trade away your religion for it; nor should you hold yourself above them arrogantly. If you ask one of them for help and he gives it, then he is your brother; but if he does not, do not castigate him for it and make an enemy of him. Do not offer any of them advice unless you have reason to believe he will take it, since otherwise he will only oppose you. If you see from them anything good, noble, or praiseworthy, give the credit to God, Mighty and Glorious is He; praise Him, and ask Him not to entrust you to them. If you encounter evil, foul speech, backbiting, or anything else unpleasant from them, leave it to God to deal with it. Seek refuge in Him from their evil, and ask for His help against them. Do not bother rebuking them, as it will not do any good and they will simply become your enemies. Repent to God Most High of the sin that He allowed them to commit, and ask His forgiveness for it. Give ear to their truth, and be deaf to their falsehood.

Good Conduct With One's Parents

Pay heed to what they say, stand when they stand, obey their instructions, heed their summons, and show them humility and mercy. Do not pester them or make them feel indebted for the favors you have done them and for your dutifulness to them. Do not give them a sharp glance or disobey them in any way.

Good Conduct With One's Children

Parents should help their children with their duties and not ask more of them than they are capable of. They should not be too harsh with them when rebuking them, or hinder them from obeying their Lord, or make them feel indebted to them for raising them.

The Good Conduct of Siblings

Siblings should be happy to meet one another, each one trying to be the first to greet the other. They should make one another comfortable and give them plenty of room to sit, and get up to see them off when they leave. They should give each other time to speak, and not get drawn into arguments. They should tell one another pleasant stories, refrain from answering back, and call one another by the names they like best.

The Good Conduct of the Neighbor

Try to greet your neighbor first, but do not spend too long talking to him or ask too many questions. Visit him when he is ill, console him when he is bereaved, and congratulate him when he has good news. Speak gently to his children and servants, and keep your eyes away from his female family members and maids. Overlook

his faults, correct him gently when he strays, and come to his side if he calls for aid.

The Good Conduct of a Master With His Slave

A master should not burden his slave with more than he can bear. He should be gentle when rebuking him and not use excessive violence, nor verbally abuse him so much that he become rebellious. He should explain when he has made a mistake, and accept his excuses. If [the slave] makes food for him, he should invite him to sit and eat with him at the same table, or give him a share of the meal.

The Good Conduct of a Slave With His Master

A slave must obey his master's commands and be loyal to him in his absence. He should serve him dutifully, preserve the sanctity of his home, and treat his children gently. He must not misspend his master's money.

The Good Conduct of a Ruler With His Subjects

A ruler should be gentle, not despotic. He should not be arrogant towards his inner circle or allow enmity to develop among them. He should be affectionate to the masses, while still keeping them in awe of him. He must be aware of what is going on in his court. He should be magnanimous with the *'ulamā'*, and generous to them and to his friends and family. He should be temperate in matters of justice, while ensuring the protection of his subjects.

The Good Conduct of Subjects With Their Ruler

Subjects should keep away from the ruler's door and not ask his help unless it is direly needed. They should always revere him even if he is gentle, not daring to test him even if he is lenient, and should not ask much of him even if he is generous. They should pray for him when he is present, and refrain from speaking of him when he is absent.

The Good Conduct of the Judge

A judge must be silent, dignified, and serene. He must keep corruption and tyranny out of his sphere of influence. He must be gentle with widows and protective of orphans. He must be unhurried in his verdicts, mild in dealing with the opposing parties, and impartial between them. He must admonish those who break the law; and he must always turn to God for help with his judgments.

The Good Conduct of the Witness

A witness must be trustworthy and never dishonest. He must testify confidently, guard against forgetfulness, and avoid disputing with the authorities.

The Good Conduct of Armed Struggle

One who engages in armed struggle must have a sincere intention and be zealous for the cause of God. He must do his utmost and be happy to give his life. He must suppress any desire to flee, and be intent on *God's Word* being *uppermost*.¹ He must not purloin from the spoils. He must settle his debts before setting out to fight. He must remember God while fighting and at all times.

The Good Conduct of the Prisoner of War

A prisoner of war must not hope to gain release through anyone but God Most High, nor degrade himself by disobeying Him. He must not lose hope of God's compassion. He must place all his worries in front of God, knowing that he is under His protective eyes. He must not enjoy anything in the enemy's possession that God does not permit. He must not seek help or refuge from anyone but God.

Some General Aspects of Good Conduct

One of the wise said:ⁱ Meet friend and foe alike with a contented face, neither demeaning yourself before them nor holding them in awe. Be dignified without being proud. In all things, take the middle way. Do not look from side to side, nor gaze here and there. Do not stand aloof at gatherings. When you sit down, sit upright and be careful not to interlace your fingers, play with your ring, pick your teeth, pick your nose, wave flies away from your face, or sigh or yawn excessively. Sit calmly and speak little. Listen to the good things people say, but do not express curiosity or admiration, and do not be servile or respond in kind. Pay no heed to jokes and stories. Do not speak with pride about your children or your slave-girl.

Do not indulge in womanish affectation, nor behave vulgarly like a slave. Be moderate in all your affairs. Do not over-apply kohl or make your hair too slick with oil. Do not badger people when making requests of them.

i Ghazālī concludes the second chapter of Book Five of the Second Quarter of the *Ihyā'* with this same passage, with some slight differences in wording. Much of it is found in the *Rawḍat al-'uqalā'* of Ibn Hibbān, under the heading "The counsel of Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Mu'allā al-Makhzūmī to his son."

Do not let your wife or children know about your finances, much less anyone else. If they consider it little, they will disparage it, and if they consider it much, it will not be enough to satisfy them. Be compassionate with them, not stern, and lenient without being weak.

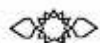
When you have a dispute, be respectful and first consider your arguments. Do not gesture wildly with your hands, or plead upon your knees. Speak only when your anger has abated.

If you should have the misfortune to find yourself in the company of the ruler, be very cautious of him and never feel secure that he will not turn against you. Be as gentle with him as with a child, and speak to him as much as he desires you to. Do not under any circumstances come between him and his wife, children, or retinue, even if you think he would pay heed to what you said.

Beware of the fair-weather friend, for he is your worst enemy. Do not value your wealth over your honor.

Do not develop the habit of spitting in front of other people, for it is an effeminate trait. Do not tell your friend everything that offends you, or he will take advantage of it if you should ever have a falling-out.

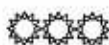
Do not joke with an intelligent man, lest he resent you, nor with a fool, lest he disrespect you. Joking is undignified and makes you lose face. It gives rise to resentment, spoils the sweetness of affection, blunts perceptiveness, kills the heart, and distances one from the Lord. Too much joking will attract criticism, weaken your resolve, darken your inner consciousness, dull your thoughts, increase your sins, and expose your blemishes.



We ask God to guide us among all whom He guides, and grant us wellbeing among all those whom He grants wellbeing, and protect us among all those He protects. We ask Him to bless us in all that He gives us, and to protect us from the evil of all that He decrees; for none can repel His decree, and none who oppose Him can be mighty, and none whom He protects can be degraded.

Hallowed and Exalted be our Lord. We ask His forgiveness and repent to Him. We ask Him to bestow the best of His blessings upon His Chosen Prophet, and upon all his Family and Companions, the exemplars of guidance, and grant them abundant peace.

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and may God bless our master Muḥammad, the Unlettered Prophet. Amen.





THE TEN PRECEPTS

Al-Qawā'id al-ʿashr





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

Author's Introduction

Praise be to God the Giver of Success, Who has graced the hearts of His beloved ones with success in following the teaching of the Sunna and the dictates of the Qur'ān. Praise be to God the Opener, who opened their inner eyes so that they could see the battle-stations of the archers of doubt whose arrows are targeted at the most vulnerable spots of people veiled from the truth. Praise be to God the Inspirer, Who inspired them with brilliantly bright proof upon the straight, green Path so that they arrived at the virgin truth; and Who called to them from the gardens of love. How could a lover sleep, instead of beholding his beloved? They decorated their eyes with the kohl of wakefulness, and forsook the sweetness of sleeping in their beds. Instead, along with other seekers they devoted themselves to the quest, turning their days into nights and their joys into sorrows. They humbled themselves before the might of their Lord and entreated Him at His doorstep; and so He made them at home, be they in town or country, and made them heed His every commandment and prohibition. How fortunate they are to have the grace to stand at His door!

Then He lifted from before them the veil hiding His Beauty, and cleared the fog that shrouded the splendors of His Word. They were dazzled by the glorious things they beheld, and wept

rivers of tears of woe when they recalled the sins of the past. They remained by the door until finally the reply came: "My servants, I am the Oft-Relenting One, Who accepts the repentance of the contrite when they turn to Him."

In the abode of communion, He gave them to drink of the wine of connection—and what a drink! They experienced the bliss of intimate discourse with Him and became oblivious to themselves in His Presence, and then returned to their senses. Weary is the traveler in the noonday sun, and bold is the man who applies kohl to his eyes with a dagger;ⁱ but let him rejoice, for he has attained the discourse most sublime.

The Lord has lifted the separating veil,
 And let His loved ones hear the sweetest discourse;
 Admitted thereby to presence with intimacy,
 They have vanished to live there after torment's death.
 He has brought them into the station of nearness,
 Giving them to drink of the wine which is there.
 In return for their faithfulness to Him,
 He has granted them a warrant of total security.
 They are the proud kings among His creatures,
 those worn out by God for the glory of the veil.
 They followed the path, the way of guidance,
 followed the decrees of the text of the Book,
 Held fast to the Sunna of the Best of Mankind,
 Called themselves to account before the Day of Reckoning.
 They contended with their own selves, in fear
 Of the wrath of God and the terror of Hell.
 When night-time comes, you will see them rejoice
 At the joining of the parted beneath its dark veil.

i Reading *khanājir* (daggers) where the published text has *hanājir* (throats).

They love Him with remembrance, that He may give them life
 By remembering them among those He rewards.
 God sees them well, and takes pride in them;
 Through them punishment is averted from mankind.
 May my greetings of peace be raised up to them,
 As long as lightning flashes or clouds rain down.

I praise Him in hope of His reward, and I thank Him in anticipation of increase from Him. I bear witness that there is no god but God, alone without partner, transcendent beyond incarnation or encapsulation, manifestation or obscurity, beginning or end, uncovering or veiling. His Essence is hallowed beyond ignorant statements of quantity, modality, location, situation, time, motion, or relocation. I glorify Him by the things that in His wisdom He has brought into being, transcending in His magnificence all thought, reflection, assistance, consultation, repose, exertion, or appointment. I exalt Him beyond all comparison, likeness, equivalence, transference, substitution, structure, or compositeness.

I bear witness that our master Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, His dearest beloved, the noblest and most beloved of all creation. He sent him with the gift of Revelation and the decisive word, and aided him with the greatest Book and the most beautiful discourse. He was the most eloquent of the Arabs, the most succinct in speech, more articulate than the masters of rhetoric. He rescued those who love him from the perilous pits of doubt and torment, and cleared away the dark fog of idolatry from the light of Islam. May God bless him and his beloved Family and Companions and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs: Abū Bakr, Abū Ḥafṣ, Abū 'Amr, and Abū Turāb—a blessing to save us from the abode of torment and carry us into the abode of bliss.

With that said: may God let the breezes of His nearness blow upon us one and all, and give us to drink from the cup of His love.

The way to tread our path and follow the way of our masters may be summarized in ten precepts. These precepts should suffice to awaken the sleeping, and bring the sitting to their feet.



The first precept is an intention that is sincere and unbending, for the Prophet ﷺ said, "Actions are defined by intentions alone, and each person will have just what they intended." Intention means the heart's sincere resolve to carry out something, or to refrain from something, for the sake of God. It is also for it to hold fast to this resolve again and again, for repetition has a unique effect. The sign of true intention is that the resolve is not shaken by ephemeral accidents, but remains firm. A deed done for God must be firm and true, and must not be given up on other people's account.



The second precept is to act for the sake of God alone and for no other. The Prophet said, peace be upon him, "Worship God as if you see Him; for if you see Him not, He sees you." The sign of this is that one finds no contentment in anything but God, and sees all other things as distractions from Him, and so avoids creation. The Chosen Prophet said, "Wretched is the slave of the gold coin!"

This also means putting all of one's hopes in God alone, Peerless and Exalted is He; for the Prophet said, peace be upon him, "Part of being a good Muslim is to mind one's own business." This is especially true of doubtful things, which you must beware of involvement in. The Prophet said, peace be upon him, "Leave what makes you doubtful for what does not."

When you actualize these three principles they will bring you close to God, so that you will be in this world in body, but in the

Next World in spirit. Your degree of stability in matters of action and restraint will determine the degree to which you achieve realization of the well-known hadith: "Be in this world like a stranger or a passer-by, and count yourself among the inhabitants of the graves."

The sign of contentment is to suffice with enough to protect oneself from cold, heat, and hunger; for the Prophet ﷺ said, "It is enough for the son of Adam to have a few morsels to keep his back straight." One who has barley should not envy one who has wheat, nor should one who has little be discontented. One who has enough should not look for more, even if it be lawful—let alone if it be doubtful. The mark of a "stranger" is to carry a light load and not wish for a heavy one, nor to ask for anything, but to "betake himself to the shadow of a stranger."ⁱ The mark of a "passer-by" is to be quick to answer when people call, and to be content and delighted with whatever comes one's way. The mark of one who is "dead"ⁱⁱ is to have no concern, most of the time, for anything other than one's religion and salvation.



The third precept is to submit to God absolutely and struggle against the self, enduring whatever hardships this brings. It is to abandon vain desire and renounce pleasures, status, and all contrariness. Whoever acquires this habit will break through the veil and gain spiritual revelations, exchanging sleep for wakefulness, company for isolation, satiation for hunger, glory for humility, speech for silence, and much for little.

i This means relying on the generosity and protection of strangers; the wording suggest an allusion to the account of Moses' arrival in Midian as told in *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*.

ii This refers to the "inhabitants of the graves" in the aforementioned hadith.



The fourth precept is to base one's actions on conformity rather than personal initiative, lest one indulge one's vain desire and caprice or take pride in one's own judgement. Anyone who tries to make himself the captain of his own ship will not succeed, for the Prophet said, peace be upon him, "You must hear and obey, even if the orders come from an Abyssinian slave." Theⁱ true follower is the Sunni, not the Shi'ite, or Mu'tazilī or any other kind of innovator; for the Prophet ﷺ said, "My beloved ones, you must adhere to the vast majority." They said, "Messenger of God, what is the vast majority?" He replied, "It is my way and that of my Companions."



The fifth precept is to set one's sights above ruinous procrastination. As the saying goes, "Do not put off today's work till tomorrow, for some actions lead to others, and anyone who is content with the lower will be deprived of the higher."



The sixth precept is [to embrace] powerlessness and humility—not in the sense of laziness regarding good works, or refusing to make efforts, but in the sense of acknowledging your incapacity to do anything without the power of God the All-Generous. It means to view mankind with reverence and respect, since some of them are intermediaries for others, by way of extolling the Presence of the Lord of Majesty and Bounty. For it is the Way of God that

i These sentences are given under Precept 5 in the printed edition, but have been moved here in the translation as they clearly belong to Precept 4.

when He desires something, He may attribute it directly to Himself without any intermediary, or He may attribute it to another whom He desires to see revered. How can you know that everything is in the Hands of God, Peerless and Exalted is He, and that all things refer back to Him, yet still be proud of something that can only have come to you from Him? You must acknowledge your powerlessness and neediness before Him, and divest yourself of any notions of having any capability of your own—which would be to vie with Him for control of your destiny.



The seventh precept is to have fear and hope combined together; think the best of your Generous and Bountiful Lord at all times, yet never feel entirely safe from His Majestic Power until you see the truth for yourself [in the Hereafter].



The eighth precept is to be constant in one's regular spiritual observances (*wird*). This is something that one owes to God, and to one's fellow man too, for someone who has no *wird* will have no share from the sources of spiritual replenishment (*mawārid*). One who keeps up with his litanies will keep God's attention,ⁱ unlike somebody who becomes engrossed in his own words and deeds. God's replenishment expands the soul in private and in public, so that you fulfill the rights of others, love and hate for them what

i Reading *al-baqq* rather than *al-ball* here, and taking it as a reference to the hadith, "God does not lose interest until you lose interest," and *yashtaghil* for *yaghith*. The translation of this passage is tentative, because it appears to be corrupted.

you love and hate for yourself, and are as eager to please God as you are hopeful that He will please you.



The ninth precept is constant self-examination and vigilance, so that one is never unaware of God for so much as the blink of an eye. Anyone who is always keeping watch for God, incomparably Perfect and Exalted is He, in his heart, dismissing from it everything other than Him, will find Him and experience His grace. All of this will be yours if you attain the Knowledge of Certainty (*ilm al-yaqīn*), which means to see how everything that moves or lies still does so at His command and by His power, and that nothing is independent of Him. You then continue to keep observing Him until you ascend to the Eye of Certainty (*ayn al-yaqīn*), and then you pass beyond this in annihilation and come to the Reality of Certainty (*haqiqat al-yaqīn*). Then one may say: "I never saw anything without seeing in it God, Transcendently Perfect and Exalted is He." He sustains all things through His All-Sustaining Might, and everything you see subsists by His Command and His Omnipotent Power. Thus you will have perfect conduct with your fellow creatures, living among them with the best of conduct; as the Prophet ﷺ said, "My Lord taught me conduct, and He taught me well."

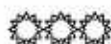


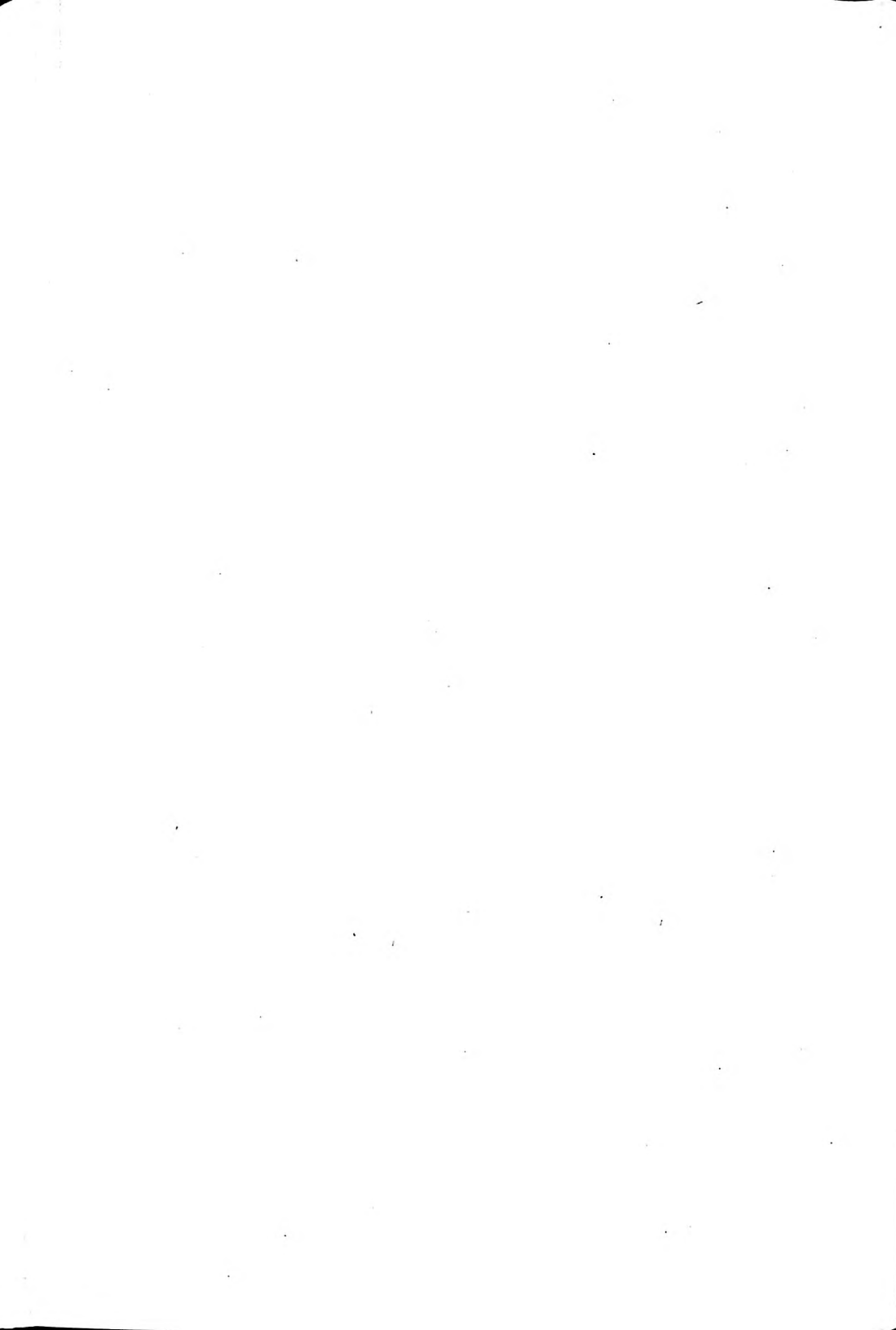
The tenth precept is to know your duties both outward and inward. Anyone who supposes that he has no need of good works is spiritually bankrupt. God Almighty says, Say, 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you' (Qur'ān 3:31).



Upon these foundations impregnable castles and towering ramparts may be built with strong stones; with these variegated seeds a great garden may be planted that yields all the crops of eternal felicity. In its paradisaal gardens great trees of remembrance will grow and rivers of invocation will flow. It will be carpeted with the peonies of spiritual striving and decked out with the bowers of mystical truths. I offer them in the hope that I may harvest their crops with the sickles of high aspirations, and with the aim of reaping the fruits of my efforts from the treasuries of divine Generosity. May God, Exalted is He, bless it and make it grow, and may all who chance upon it or find their way to it enjoy its fruits, granted true life by Him. He is the All-Generous, the Bountiful, the Most Kind, the Most Merciful.

May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon all who follow guidance and avoid innovation, and who receive benefit and pass it on, and who join the ranks of His righteous servants. May the peace and blessings of God be upon our master Muḥammad, the light of divine lights, the secret of divine truths, and upon his Family and Companions, and all who follow his way and side with him. Praise be to God, by Whose grace all righteous deeds are fulfilled and all blessings apportioned. Amen.







THE DELUSIONS OF MANKIND

*Al-Kashf wal-tabyin fi ghurūr
al-khalq ajma'in*





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

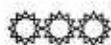
Praise be to God alone, and may God bless the best of His creation our master Muḥammad, and all his Family and Companions. In God I trust.

Creation is divided into two categories: animate beings, and inanimate beings. The animate are also divided into two: those that are held accountable (*mukallaf*), and those that are not. Those held accountable are those whom God addresses as His worshippers, and to whom He issues commandments and prohibitions, promising reward for obedience and threatening punishment for disobedience. Those not held accountable are those who are not so addressed.

Those held accountable are again divided into two: believers, and disbelievers. The believers too are divided into the obedient, and the sinful. Each of these is in turn divided into the knowledgeable and the ignorant.

I have observed that all of those who are held responsible, whether believers or disbelievers, are constantly beset by delusions, except for the precious few whom God protects. In this book, God willing, I shall unveil their delusions and thoroughly explain and

refute them as succinctly and persuasively as I can. Let me begin—
and if I should succeed, it will be thanks to God alone.





THE DELUSIONS OF THE DISBELIEVERS

Know that aside from the disbelievers, deluded people may be divided into four types: the learned, the worshippers, the wealthy, and the aspiring Sufis. We shall begin with the delusions of the disbelievers, which are of two kinds: some are deluded by the life of this world, others have fallen victim to Satan's deceptions regarding God. The former are those who say, "Cash is better than credit, and the pleasures of the world are certain, while those of the Hereafter are in doubt; why should we exchange certainty for doubt?" This argument is false; it is nothing but the argument of Iblis, may God curse him, who said, *I am better than him. You created me from fire, and created him from clay* (Qur'ān 7:12), imagining that superiority is rooted in causality. This delusion is cured by two things: with acceptance of the truth, which is faith, or with argument. Belief simply means to believe God Almighty when He says, *That which is in God's keeping is better and more lasting* (Qur'ān 28:60), and when He says, *The present life is but the comfort of delusion* (Qur'ān 3:185). It is also to believe the Messenger ﷺ in all that he taught.

As for argument, it is to recognize the falsehood of the argument. The claim that the world is cash and the Hereafter is credit may be a sound premise; but the second premise—that cash is better than credit—is what is questionable, for that is not the case. If the cash is of equal value to the credit, then it may be better; but if the credit is of greater value, it is better than the cash. It is obvious

that the Hereafter is forever, while this world is not. As for the claim that the pleasures of the world are certain, while those of the Hereafter are in doubt, that too is false, because the believers know that the pleasures of the Hereafter are certain as well. This certainty has two channels: the first is simple faith and belief, with the same blind trust in the Prophets and scholars as a patient has in the skilled physician. The second channel is the Revelation that is given to the Prophets, and the inspiration that is given to the saints. Do not suppose that the Prophet's ﷺ knowledge of the affairs of the Hereafter or the world was the result of blind trust in Gabriel ﷺ; for blind trust is not sound knowledge, and far be it from the Prophet ﷺ to have been in that position. Things were unveiled to him, and he saw them with the light of insight just as he saw physical objects with his eyesight. When the believers—those who have faith both in word and in their hearts—neglect the things that God enjoins, which are righteous actions, and sully themselves with base appetites, they share this delusion together with the disbelievers. The life of this world is a delusion for all, believers and non-believers alike.

As for the way in which disbelievers are deluded regarding God, one example is that some of them might say or think, "If God did resurrect us, we would be more deserving of Paradise than others," as God says of them in Sūrat al-Kahf: *And he went into his garden, wronging himself, and said, 'I do not think that this will ever perish. Nor do I think that the Hour will ever come; and if indeed I am returned to my Lord, I will surely find a resort even better than this'* (Qur'ān 18:35–36). The cause of this delusion is that it is based on one of the analogies which are used by Iblīs, may God curse him. Sometimes they look to the blessings that God grants them in this world and they suppose that the same awaits them in the Hereafter; and sometimes they consider how God's punishment has been forestalled from them in this life, and they imagine that

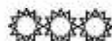
the same will be true in the Next. God tells us that they say, *Why does God not punish us for what we say?* (Qur'ân 58:8).

Other times they look at the believers and see that they are poor, and so they say, *Are these the ones whom God has favored among us?* (Qur'ân 6:53); and they say, *Had it been anything good, they would not have beaten us to it* (Qur'ân 46:11). If one could summarize the argument that their hearts have produced, it would be something like this: "God has blessed us in this world, while means that He must love us, which means that He will always be kind to us." Yet that does not hold, for a person can be kind to another without necessarily loving him, and his kindness could even be a way of tempting him into destruction. This is pure delusion regarding God Almighty. Therefore the Prophet ﷺ said, "God protects His servant from the world just as one of you might protect a sick relative from food or drink, though he loves him."¹ This is why when people of true insight encounter good fortune in this world they mourn as though it were a loss, but rejoice when they are poor and say, "Welcome to the hallmarks of the righteous!"

The Almighty says, *As for man, when his Lord tests him by honoring him and blessing him, he says, 'My Lord has honored me!* (Qur'ân 89:15); *Do they suppose that with the wealth and children We provide them, We are hastening to do good for them? No, but they are unaware!* (Qur'ân 23:55-56); *We shall draw them on by degrees whence they know not. Yet I will grant them respite; truly My scheme is firm* (Qur'ân 68:44-45); *So when they forgot what they had been reminded of, We opened to them the gates of all things, until, as they exulted in what they had been given, We seized them suddenly, and they despaired* (Qur'ân 6:44).

One cannot believe in God and entertain such delusions as well, for they arise from ignorance of God and His Attributes. Anyone who knows God never feels safe from His plotting. [The deluded ones] do not reflect upon Pharaoh, Haman, and Nimrod and what

befell them despite the great wealth that God granted them. God warns us of His plotting, saying: *Did they feel secure from God's plotting? None feel secure from God's plotting but those who are lost* (Qur'ān 7:99); *So bear with the disbelievers; respite them for a while* (Qur'ān 86:17). If God should grant you a blessing, take care that it is not a curse in disguise.





THE DELUSIONS OF SINFUL BELIEVERS

The chief delusion of sinful believers is that they say, "God is Forgiving and Merciful, and we hope for His pardon" and rely on this entirely, neglecting good works. Of course it is commendable to hope for the best from God, and it is true that God's mercy is vast, His blessing extensive, His generosity immeasurable. We are believers in God and His oneness, and we hope for the best from Him through the intermediary of our faith, and His generosity and kindness. Sometimes people get into this situation because of their reliance on the pious reputations of their forebears—which is the height of delusion, for in addition to being pious, their forebears were fearful of God. The argument which Satan has made to look appealing to them can be summarized as follows: "When a person loves someone, he loves his children too. God loved your forebears, so He must love you too, and you have no need to obey Him. Rely on this, and delude yourselves regarding God!" They forget that Noah عليه السلام was on the point of taking his son on board the Ark with him but was prevented from doing so, and that God drowned him in the same terrible flood in which he drowned the rest of Noah's people. Our own Prophet ﷺ too asked permission to visit his mother's grave and pray for forgiveness for her, and he was permitted to visit but not to pray.

They also forget that God Most High says, *No soul shall bear the burden of another* (Qur'ān 35:18), and *Man shall have only what he strives for* (Qur'ān 53:39). Anybody who thinks he will

be saved by his father's righteousness is like someone who thinks his hunger will be satiated when his father eats, or his thirst quenched when his father drinks. God-consciousness is a personal obligation, and a father cannot fulfill it on his son's behalf. When the recompense for it is handed out, every man *will flee from his brother, his mother and father, and his wife and children* (Qur'ān 80:34-36); and no help will come from anyone else, unless through intercession.

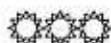
They forget, too, that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The intelligent person is the one who calls himself to account, and who works for what will come after death. The fool is the one who pursues his base desires, yet expects all kinds of things from God" (Ibn Mājah 4260); and that God Almighty says, *Truly those who believe, and those who emigrate and struggle in God's cause, have hope of the mercy of God; and God is Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful* (Qur'ān 2:218); and *No soul knows what joy is kept in store for it as reward for what they used to do* (Qur'ān 32:17). Is there any valid cause for hope when you have not done any work toward that? If you have not, the hope is total delusion. The purpose of hope is to cool the heat of fear and despair, and to encourage us always to ask God for increase, which is why the Qur'ān makes mention of it.



Similar to this is the delusion of those who have both good and bad deeds to their account, but more bad than good. They expect to be forgiven and suppose that their good deeds outweigh the bad, though they do not. This is the height of ignorance. One of them might donate money to charity that is a mixture of lawful and unlawful income, while taking many times more from doubtful sources and the property of others. He might as well put ten coins

in one scalepan and a thousand in the other and expect them to be balanced, so ignorant is his attitude.

Then there are those who believe that their good deeds outnumber their sins, the reason being that they do not hold themselves to account or pay attention to their misdeeds, but only to their righteous works. One of them might ask God's forgiveness verbally, or glorify Him day and night hundreds or thousands of times, but then backbite his fellow Muslims and say things that are displeasing to God all day. He pays heed to the narrations about the merit of glorifying God, but overlooks those about the terrible punishment for lying, tale-bearing, and hypocrisy. This is pure delusion, for it is more important to restrain the tongue from sin than to engage it in invocation. Glory be to the One Who bars us from understanding this!





THE FOUR CHIEF CATEGORIES OF DELUDED PEOPLE

The Delusions of the Learned

There are several kinds of deluded scholars. First, there are those who master the traditional and rational sciences to a high degree of depth and engagement, yet neglect to protect their bodies from sin and employ them in the performance of righteous works. Deluded by their knowledge, they imagine that they have such high standing before God on account of their great learning that He would never dream of punishing them or holding them to account for their sins—and indeed that He would accept their intercession for others as well as excusing their own misdeeds. This is delusional, for if they had any insight they would see that there are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge that concerns behavior, and knowledge that concerns spiritual unveiling. The latter means knowledge of God Almighty and His Attributes; and if this is to be fully realized, it must be accompanied by knowledge of the proper way to behave, which means knowing the lawful from the unlawful and good character from bad. Such people are like a physician who heals others but does not see to his own sickness, even though he is capable of doing so. Can an illness be cured merely by describing its treatment? Of course not; the medicine must be taken. They are heedless of the Words of the Almighty, *Prosperous is the one who purifies it [the soul], and ruined is the one who obscures it* (Qur'ān

91:9-10). He did not say, "Prosperous is the one who knows how to purify it, and who writes it down and teaches it to others."

They are also heedless of the Prophet's ﷺ sayings, "Whoever grows in knowledge but not in guidance only grows farther from God;"ⁱ "The person punished most severely on the Day of Resurrection will be the learned man whom God did not cause to benefit from his knowledge;"¹ and other similar sayings. We seek God's refuge from such a deluded state; for [such people] are dominated by love for this world, love for themselves, and the pursuit of immediate comfort, while imagining that their knowledge will be enough to secure their salvation even without any righteous deeds.



Then there are those who do master outward knowledge and action and refrain from outward sin, but neglect their hearts and fail to cleanse them of attributes that are blameworthy in the sight of God, such as pride, ostentation, envy, ambition for power and status, ill will towards peers and associates, and desire for fame and renown. This is their delusion, and the root of it is that they have forgotten the Prophet's ﷺ sayings, "Ostentation is the lesser idolatry;"² "Envy consumes good deeds even as fire consumes wood" (Ibn Mājah 4210); "Love of wealth and honor cause hypocrisy to grow in the heart, just as water causes plants to grow;"ⁱⁱ and other such sayings. They also forget that the Almighty says, *But only him who comes to God with a sound heart* (Qur'ān 26:89). They overlook their hearts and concern themselves only with their outward appearances; but righteous actions are of no benefit if the

i 'Irāqī attributes this narration to al-Daylami in *Musnad al-Firdaws*.

ii Bayhaqī, *Kubrā*, but with "affluence" rather than "love for wealth and honor"; Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī states in his commentary on *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* that he could not find this hadith with that precise wording.

heart is inattentive to them. They are like a patient whose illness has caused a rash on his face, so the doctor tells him to conceal the rash with paste and take medicine to cure it, but he uses the paste and not the medicine. He conceals the outer symptom, but does not treat the inner malady that causes it, so the rash continues to spread. If he treated what is inside him, the rash would go away. Likewise, when the heart harbors diseases, their effects manifest upon the outward body.



Then there are those who know of these inward character traits and that the Law condemns them, but are so self-satisfied that they believe themselves to be free of them, and that God would not bother people of their status with such misfortunes. They deem such things to be the concern of common people alone, not of learned folk such as themselves. The signs of pride, ambition, and desire for status and honor are all too visible in them, but they are so deluded that they suppose that to be not pride but zeal for the faith and a desire to honor knowledge and support God's religion. They forget that Iblis too felt complacent in the same way, and how it was that the Prophet ﷺ attained victory and overcame the disbelievers. They forget the humble, plain, and modest lives that the Companions lived, to the extent that 'Umar ؓ himself was criticized for the disheveled state in which he arrived in Damascus, to which he replied, "We are a people whom God honored with Islam. We do not seek honor from anything else."

A person suffering from this delusion might seek to honor the faith by wearing fancy clothing, claiming that his intention is to afford the proper respect to religion and learning. Should he speak with envy about a peer or someone who disagrees with him, he does not see it as envy on his part, but as fervor for the sake of

the truth and a proper response to falsehood and injustice. He is deluded, for when other scholars and peers of his are attacked, he does not feel the same anger for their sake, and he might even be pleased, even if he does make a show of anger in front of others. He might advertise his knowledge and claim that his intention is to benefit his fellow men, when in truth he is simply showing off. If he truly cared about the welfare of others, he would not care whose agency it came by, whether it be his equal, his superior, or his inferior.

Such a man might visit rulers and behave obsequiously towards them, and claim later that his intent was to help the Muslims and keep them from harm. Yet he is deluded, for if that were his desire he would not care who achieved it, be it himself or someone else; yet when he sees his peer visiting the sultan to intercede for someone, he becomes enraged. He might accept gifts from them, and should the thought arise in his mind that it may be unlawful to do so, Satan tells him, "It would only go to waste otherwise, since it belongs to no one. It is for the good of the Muslims, and you are their imam and chief scholar, and the welfare of the faith depends on you." All three of these assertions are false; for it does not belong to no one, and it is not for the good of the Muslims, and he is not an imam. For what is an imam but someone who turns away from the world, as the Prophets, Companions, and righteous scholars of this Community did? But this man is like the one of whom Jesus ﷺ said, "A bad scholar is like a rock that falls into a river and blocks it; it neither drinks the water nor allows it to reach the fields." The delusions of learned people are many, and such scholars do more harm than good.



Then there are those who master the sciences, purify their bodies, put their learning into practice with righteous works, avoid external sins, examine themselves closely to identify the ostentation, envy, pride, rancor, and ambition in their hearts, and then struggle against their souls to uproot all those vices; yet still they are deluded, for in the deepest recesses of their hearts they still harbor remnants of Satan's schemes and the most cunning treacheries of the soul, too subtle for them to discern. They are like a farmer who wants to clear all the weeds from his field, so he walks back and forth uprooting every weed he sees, but does not look beneath the soil, assuming that the only weeds in the field are the ones he can see poking above the earth. Then when he thinks he is finished, he goes on his way, leaving the weeds beneath the soil to emerge and ruin his crops. Those who are deluded in this manner might change their attitudes towards others and stop mixing with them out of pride, or view them disparagingly. Conversely, others might strive to put on an impressive display in front of other people to ensure that they do not look on them as being weak or inconsequential.



Then there are those who, instead of pursuing the more important fields of knowledge, confine themselves to the science of legal opinion in matters of governance, disputes, and the worldly transactions that take place between people in day-to-day life. They call this jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and knowledge of the school of law (*madh-hab*), and call its practitioner a jurist (*faqih*). Yet while pursuing it, they may neglect the science of righteous deeds both outward and inward, and fail to restrain their bodies from sin: their tongues from backbiting, their bellies from unlawful food, their feet from walking to the palaces of kings, and so on for the rest. Nor do

they guard their hearts against pride, ostentation, envy, and the other ruinous vices.

Such people are deluded in two ways. The first is that they are deluded with regard to actions. We have discussed in the *Ihyā'*ⁱ the proper way to cure this, and how they are like a sick man who learns from physicians what the cure is but then does not impart that knowledge or use it. They court disaster, for they neglect to purify their souls and adorn them with virtues, and instead busy themselves with studying the laws of subjects such as menstruation, blood-money, or the various forms of marital discord, wasting their lives on their minutiae. What deludes them is that people afford them great respect and veneration, appointing them judges and muftis. They speak ill of one another behind their backs, but are all smiles when they meet.

The second is that they are deluded with regard to knowledge, for they believe that their learning is the only one that matters, and that salvation lies within it. Yet in reality salvation lies only in the love of God, and one cannot love God without knowing Him, which entails three things: knowledge of the Essence, knowledge of the Attributes, and knowledge of the Acts. They are like a person who sells his provisions when halfway along his journey to the Pilgrimage. They do not know that true *fiqh*ⁱⁱ is understanding of God and knowledge of His attributes, which instills fear in the heart and makes it conscious of God: as He says, *Only a party from each group of them should go forth, that they may attain profound understanding in the faith, then warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may be cautious* (Qur'ān 9:122).

i This, a favorite subject of the author, is discussed mainly, though not only, in Book 1, The Book of Knowledge.

ii *Fiqh* became the traditional name for Islamic jurisprudence, but at root means "profound understanding."

Some of them are interested only in matters of scholarly dispute and desire only to learn how to debate and defeat their rivals, defending the truth for the sake of pride and glory. Night and day, they devote themselves to studying the contradictions between the schools of law and finding errors in their rivals' arguments. Such people are not interested in knowledge at all, but only in lording over their peers. Their time would be better spent on purifying their hearts of any knowledge that has no benefit outside of worldly advantage and pride; for in the Hereafter, such knowledge will be transformed into a blazing fire. As for the proofs for the schools of law, they are all found within the Book of God and the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This [type of false intention] truly is a vile delusion.



Then there are those who study theology and disputation, collecting as many diverse opinions as they can find in order to debate with others and refute them. Some of them are misguided and some hold true beliefs, but they are both deluded in different ways. The delusion of the misguided ones is that they do not realize that they are misguided, but think that salvation is on their side. They comprise many different sects, each of whom considers the rest to be unbelievers. They are misguided because their arguments do not meet the proper criteria for establishing proofs; they mistake doubts for proofs, and proofs for doubts.

As for those who hold true beliefs, they are deluded inasmuch as they overestimate the importance of debate and afford it a status in God's religion that it does not actually have. They claim that no man's religion is complete until he engages in rational enquiry, and that anyone who simply believes God without examining the evidence is not a true believer or close to God. They disregard the

fact that the Prophet ﷺ testified that the first generation of Muslims were the best of all mankind, and that he did not ask them to prove their faith with rational arguments. Abū Umāma al-Bāhili related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "No people ever went astray except after they became given to disputation" (Tirmidhī 3253).



Then there are those who engage in preaching, the highest rank of which is to speak about the traits of the soul and attributes of the heart such as fear, hope, patience, gratitude, reliance, asceticism, certainty, sincerity, and truthfulness. Yet they are deluded, for they think that if they speak about these things and enjoin them upon others, it will be the same as if they had acquired them personally, when in fact they lack all but the smallest amount of them that any Muslim possesses. This delusion is especially powerful, for they think very highly of themselves and suppose that they are deeply immersed in the science of love, and that God has granted them salvation and forgiveness, simply because they have memorized the sayings of the ascetics without acting upon them in the slightest.

These people are more severely deluded than any of the others mentioned before them. They imagine that they are beloved to God and His Messenger ﷺ, and that they would not understand the subtle details of sincerity unless they were sincere, nor be aware of the hidden flaws of the soul unless they were free of them. Yet they love the world more than anyone, and only act as though they renounce it because they covet it so sorely. They urge others to be sincere when they are not so themselves, and call others to God even as they flee from Him, and tell others to fear God even as they feel secure from Him. They remind others of God while forgetting Him themselves, and tell others to draw near to Him while they fall further from Him. They condemn blameworthy

attributes that they themselves possess. They tell others to turn away from creation, while themselves clinging to it with all their might. If they were barred from the gatherings they hold in which they call people to God, they would feel as if the earth, for all its vastness, were closing in upon them. They claim that all they want is for people to become righteous, but if one of them were to see people flocking to one of his peers for righteous instruction, he would die of envy and despair. If one of his regular visitors praised one of his peers, he would become his worst enemy. Such people are the most deluded of all, and the most difficult to help or bring back to the right path.



Then there are those who neglect what is important and necessary when they preach—and all the preachers of this era are of this sort, except those whom God protects—and instead engage in incoherent ravings (*tāmāt*), ecstatic utterances, and all manner of outlandish pronouncements that contravene the Law and justice, and deliberately trying to be extreme. Others employ artificial and pretentious speech, devoting more effort to wordplay than to meaningful content. Their goal is to work their gatherings into raptures and cries, though for motives that are corrupt. Such people are simply demons among mankind, who are astray and seek to lead others astray. The others,ⁱ even if they have not rectified themselves, do at least rectify others and ensure that their speaking and preaching is correct; but these ones lead others astray from the path of God, dragging them into delusions and false beliefs about the Almighty with their corrupt teachings, so that they are attracted to sin and worldliness. This is especially true if the preacher wears fine clothes

i The preachers described in the previous section.

and maintains a good appearance but his preaching leads them to despair of God's mercy.



There is another category, comprising those who are impressed by the teachings of the ascetics and their condemnations of the world, and who repeat them from memory without understanding what they mean. Some may repeat them from the pulpit, or tell them to people they sit with in the market, imagining that God will assure them salvation and forgiveness simply for memorizing the words of the ascetics without having any good works of their own. Such people are more severelyⁱ deluded than those previously mentioned.



Then there are those who spend their time studying hadiths, by which I mean listening to hadith readings and collecting many narrations, seeking out rare and short chains of transmission. One of these might aspire to travelling from land to land, narrating from shaykhs from far and wide, in order to be able to say "I relate from So-and-So," and "I have met So-and-So," and "I have chains of transmission that no one else possesses."

Such people are deluded in several ways. One is that they are like porters carrying books, since they devote no effort to understanding the Sunna and contemplating what it means, but only to transmission, supposing that this is enough when it most certainly is not. The purpose of studying a hadith is to understand and reflect on it. The correct approach is to hear the hadith, then memorize

i The equivalent passage in the *Ihya'* has "more obviously" here rather than "more severely."

it, then understand it, then act upon it, then transmit it. Yet these people are concerned only with the first step, and even then they do not do it well, though there would be no point in it even if they did. In our times, any child may read a hadith, even if he be naïve and heedless. The shaykh with whom he reads it might be negligent himself, so that the student misreads or distorts a hadith without his teacher being aware of it [and correcting him]. He might even fall asleep while the student continues to relate his hadiths without him being aware of it. All of this is delusion. The foundation of hadith narration is to hear the hadith directly from the Prophet ﷺ and memorize it just as one heard it, then transmit it just as one heard it, so that the transmission is based on memorization, and the memorization on direct hearing. If it is not possible to hear it directly from the Prophet ﷺ, one must hear it from the Companions or Followers, so that it is as if one heard it from the Prophet ﷺ. This means listening carefully and memorizing, then relating it exactly as one memorized it with enough care that one does not doubt in so much as a single letter. If there is any doubt, it is not permitted to transmit or teach it, and it would be sinful to do so.

A hadith may be memorized in two ways. One is to memorize by heart by means of constant repetition, and the other is to write it down and have the shaykh check it, and then to memorize it as well, so that even if someone were to get their hands on the book and alter it, you would still keep it in your heart as well as in your library.ⁱ It is not permitted to write a certificate of transmission for anyone and everyone who hears a hadith reading, regardless of whether or not he was paying attention or even awake, or whether he is an adult or a child. If that were permissible, one could read

ⁱ This translation is a paraphrase based on the similar passage in the *Iḥyāʾ*, for additional clarity.

hadiths to a baby in the cradle and then write a certificate of transmission for him.

There are many other requirements for valid hadith transmission, but what is most important is to say that the purpose of studying hadiths is to understand them and act in accordance with them; for they have many meanings, just like the Qur'ān. It is related that Abū Sufyān ibn Abī al-Khayr al-Mīhanī once attended the lesson of Zāhir ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī. The first hadith he narrated was the Prophet's ﷺ saying, "Part of being a good Muslim is to mind one's own business" (Tirmidhī 2318). With this, Abū Sufyān stood up and said, "That is enough for me for the moment. When I am finished with it, I will come back and hear another." That is how intelligent peopleⁱ study hadith.



Then there are those who pursue the sciences of grammar, linguistics, poetry, and lexicography and become deluded on their account, claiming that God has forgiven them and that they are numbered among the great scholars of the Community, since all study of the Qur'ān and Sunna depends on knowledge of the Arabic language. They spend their lives studying abstruse points of grammar and syntax. This is a serious delusion, for if they had any sense they would see that the Arabic language is no different than the Turkish language, in that someone who wastes his life studying Arabic is no different from someone who wastes his life studying Turkish, or Hindi, or any other language. The only thing that sets Arabic apart is that it is the vehicle of the Revelation, and that it is therefore sufficient to study it well enough to understand the vocabulary and grammar of the Qur'ān and Sunna. Beyond that,

i Reading *al-akyās* (intelligent people), as in the *Ihyā'*, rather than *al-nās* (people).

to devote oneself to delving into its bottomless depths is nothing but needless curiosity, and anyone who does so is deluded.

The Delusions of Those Devoted to Worship and Righteous Works

Delusions of this kind have several categories. Some are deluded regarding prayer, others regarding Qur'ānic recitation, others regarding the Pilgrimage, others regarding armed struggle, others regarding asceticism.

Firstly, there are those who neglect their obligations and yet engage in much voluntary worship. They may go to such excess in this regard that they stray into waste and transgression. For example, a person may become so full of misgivings about ablutions that he rejects water that meets all the Law's requirements for purity, dreaming up all kinds of far-fetched reasons why it might be impure. Yet conversely when it comes to food, he may ignore valid reasons for suspecting an item of food to be unlawful, and so consume something that is forbidden. If he saw things the opposite way and were more cautious about food than about water, it would be better and more in line with the example provided by the Companions رضي الله عنهم; 'Umar رضي الله عنه performed ablutions with water from a jug belonging to Christians, despite the possibility that it might have contained something impure, yet he would abstain from all manner of lawful food out of fear of consuming something unlawful.

Then there are those who are overcome by misgivings when formulating the proper intention for prayer. Satan does not let them formulate the intention correctly, but keeps on stoking their misgivings until they miss the congregational prayer, or even miss the time for the prayer entirely. Even after saying the initiatory *takbīr* they still harbor doubts in their hearts about the validity of their intention. They may be so full of misgivings when saying

the *takbīr* that they perform it in an aberrant manner and fail to listen to the *Fātiḥa*; or they may bring all this excessive caution to bear in the first action of the prayer, but then become heedless immediately afterwards and continue the prayer with no presence of heart at all. They are deluded, for they do not realize that presence of heart in the prayer is what matters. Satan deludes them into thinking that this is the right way of doing it, telling them that this caution sets them apart from the common people, and that they are doing well in their Lord's sight.

Then there are those who are beset by misgivings regarding the proper pronunciation of the *Fātiḥa* and other invocations. They are very careful to pronounce the *shadda* properly and to distinguish between the letters *dād* and *zā'*; but they neither pay attention to anything else, nor contemplate the secrets and meanings of what they are reciting. They do not realize that people are not required to pronounce the letters of the Qur'ān when reciting with any greater precision than when speaking normally. This is a terrible delusion. They are like someone who is given a message to take to the sultan's court and convey word-for-word but, when he delivers the message, concentrates on nothing other than pronouncing each letter as exactly as possible, repeating them over and over, yet entirely overlooking the purpose of the message and the proper respect due to the court. Such a man would be judged insane and dragged off to the asylum.

Then there are those who are deluded regarding the recitation of the Qur'ān, babbling it hurriedly, perhaps completing the entire Book in a day and a night. Yet as their tongues rattle it off, their hearts are lost in daydreams and worldly thoughts. They fail to reflect on the Qur'ān's meanings, be affected by its cautions and admonitions, heed its commandments and prohibitions, respond to its calls for contemplation, or appreciate its meanings rather than its literary construction alone. A person might recite the

Qur'ān a hundred times in a day and night, but if he ignores its commandments and prohibitions, he would deserve to be punished. A reciter might have a pleasant voice that he enjoys hearing when he recites, and entertain the mistaken delusion that he is enjoying intimate discourse with God and His Word, when that is far from the truth, for in fact he is only taking pleasure in the sound of his own voice. If he truly experienced the pleasure of God's Word, he would not even notice his pleasant voice or give it a second thought. True pleasure in God's Word comes from the meaning. All this, too, is a dreadful delusion.

Then there are those who are deluded about fasting. They might fast every day or on the most auspicious days, yet fail to guard their tongues from backbiting or engaging in all manner of frivolous talk throughout the day, their thoughts from ostentation, or their bellies from unlawful food when they break the fast. Such people neglect what is required and chase after what is only recommended, thinking that such conduct will be their salvation—yet they are sorely deluded, for only the one who comes to God with a sound heart will be saved.

Then there are those who are deluded about the Pilgrimage. They set out for it without first righting their wrongs and settling their debts, securing their parents' blessing, or acquiring lawful provisions. They might neglect the obligatory prayers on the way, or fail to keep their clothing and persons pure. They might expose themselves to unjust tolls so that they are exacted from them. They might fail to avoid foul language and arguments during the journey. Some of them might acquire money through unlawful means in order to spend it on their travelling companions to show off and acquire a reputation for generosity, thereby disobeying God twice over: firstly by acquiring ill-gotten gains, and secondly by spending them ostentatiously. Then once they reach the Ka'ba, they go into its presence with hearts polluted with base traits and

ignoble qualities, yet harboring the delusion that they are doing well in the sight of their Lord.

Then there are those who pursue the vocation of *hisba'* and the commanding of what is right and forbidding of what is wrong, yet do not practice what they preach. When they enjoin righteousness upon others, they do so violently and with ambition for power and status; yet if one of them should slip up and someone else should criticize him, he will say indignantly, "I am the inspector! How dare you question me?" He might gather the people in the mosque, and direct fury at anyone who comes late, his only concernⁱ being ostentation and the pursuit of power. The sign of such a man is that if someone else preached in the mosque he would be disgruntled. Similar is the one who calls the azan and believes that he is doing it for God's sake, yet if someone else were to call the azan in his absence he would feel as if the very Resurrection had arrived, and would say, "He took what was rightfully mine!" Another might be hope to be appointed the imam of a mosque and think that he is doing well, yet his only concern is to be known by the title of imam. The sign of such a man is that if someone else more qualified than him by reason of piety and knowledge were to be appointed to the position, he would be devastated.

Then there are those who are deluded by their status as residents of Mecca or Medina, despite not keeping watch over their hearts or purifying their inner and outer beings. Their hearts might still be attached to their original homelands, and you might hear one of them say as much, talking about how long he has resided in

i Reading *hisba* from the *lhyā'* rather than *khashya*, "piety." *Hisba* was an office in the Islamic state which in some respects resembles that of the religious police in the modern state of Saudi Arabia. The *muhtasib* was a supervisor or inspector who ensured that public affairs were conducted according to the Sharia.

ii Reading *innamā gharaduh*, "his only concern being" from the *lhyā'*, rather than *rubbamā 'arada lah*, "there might arise for him."

Mecca. That is delusion, for it would be better for him to be back at home with his heart attached to Mecca. As long as one does reside in one of the holy cities, one must fulfill its rights. If residing in Mecca, one must fulfill the right of God; and if residing in Medina, then the right of the Prophet ﷺ—and who can achieve that? Such people are deluded by external appearances and believe that salvation lies in the walls in which they reside, which is far from the truth. One of them might not allow himself to give so much as a morsel of food to the poor. It is difficult enough to be a good neighbor to other human beings, never mind to the Creator.ⁱ The only way to do so is to keep a close watch on one's limbs and on one's heart.

Then there are those who are content with less when it comes to wealth, food, and clothing, and happy to have nowhere to live but the mosque, and therefore imagine that they have reached the level of true asceticism. Yet they harbor desires for leadership and renown, whether on account of knowledge, preaching, or asceticism itself. They have avoided trivial dangers, but flung themselves into the most ruinous disaster of all; for renown is a greater temptation than wealth. If someone like this were to give up renown and pursue wealth instead, he would be nearer to safety. They are deluded because they think of themselves as ascetics who have renounced the world, yet they do not know the true meaning of the world. They might prefer the company of the wealthy to that of the poor. One of them might be impressed with his own knowledge, while another might prefer isolation and seclusion without having any idea what they require. One of them might be offered money, but decline it out of fear that people will say that he has given up his ascetic ways; for although he desires wealth, he craves the approval of other people even more. Another might force himself to engage

i A resident of Mecca is sometimes referred to as *Jār Allāh*, God's neighbor.

in strenuous works, performing a thousand cycles of prayer and a full recitation of the Qur'ān in a single day and night; yet not once during all that does he keep watch over his heart and ensure that it is free of ostentation, pride, self-satisfaction, and all other ruinous vices. He might imagine that his external acts of worship will tip the scale in his favor; yet that is far from the truth, for a single deed done by a God-conscious person, or a single quality of a wise man, is better than a mountain of physical actions. Another of them might become deluded when people tell him that he is one of the "Pegs" (*Awtād*) who hold the earth firm, one of the saints and beloved ones of God, exulting in this and supposing that his soul is pure. Yet if someone were to direct two or three insults at him in a single day, he would call him an unbeliever and consider him his enemy, and would tell him, "God will never forgive you for this!"

Then there are those who are more eager to perform voluntary than obligatory prayers. One of them might take great delight in the midmorning prayer, the night prayer, and other such voluntary acts, but not find the same pleasure in the obligatory prayers or seek to please God Most High by ensuring to perform them as soon as their times begin. He forgets that the Prophet ﷺ said that no one can draw nearer to God with anything more excellent than the duties He has imposed on them.¹ Failing to recognize the proper hierarchy of righteous deeds is a common blunder. A situation may arise where a person is confronted with two duties, one that can be missed and another that cannot be, or two voluntary deeds with little time for one and plenty of time for the other. If he does not know the proper hierarchy, he will fall prey to delusion. There are countless examples of such situations. Sin is obvious and easy

i Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 6502 with the wording, "My servant cannot draw nearer to Me with anything I love more than the duties I have imposed on him."

to identify. What is harder to spot is how certain good deeds take precedence over others, such as how all obligations take precedence over all voluntary deeds; or how personal duties take precedence over [communal duties, or how]ⁱ communal duties that are as yet unfulfilled by anyone take precedence over those that have been fulfilled by someone; or how more important personal duties take precedence over less important ones; or how duties that can be missed take precedence over those that cannot be. Consider, for example, how the rights of one's mother come before those of one's father, or how material support for one's parents takes precedence over the Pilgrimage; both of these are examples of how one duty may be more important than another. Or consider how the Friday prayer, when its time has arrived, takes precedence over keeping a promise," or how one must repay debts before spending money on other obligations. Rare is the individual who is sufficiently aware of all this to live up to it. It is easy to become deluded regarding this hierarchy, and none can manage it but those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

The Delusions of the Wealthy

The wealthy can be deluded in many ways. First, there are those who are eager to build mosques, schools, lodges, bridges, water-towers, and other public works, having their names inscribed upon them so that their names may live on after they die. They believe that they deserve God's forgiveness on account of this, and as such they are deluded in two ways. The first is that they might have acquired their wealth through unlawful and doubtful means such as bribery and other forms of injustice. [In that case] they have

i What is between brackets was missing here and has been supplemented from the *Iḥyā'*.

ii Following *mi'ād*, the reading in the *Iḥyā'* rather than '*id*'.

exposed themselves to God's wrath when acquiring it, and so their duty is to repent and return it to its rightful owners if they still live, or otherwise to their heirs. If they have no heirs to return it to, their duty is to use it to finance whatever is in the best interests of the public, which might simply be to distribute it to the poor. Yet instead they use it to construct useless buildings to leave behind them after they die, since they are more interested in ostentation, fame, and renown. The second aspect of their delusion is that they imagine themselves to be sincere and virtuous when they finance these huge projects, yet if one of them were asked to donate a single gold coin to a pauper anonymously he would not be able to bring himself to do it, so dominated is he by the love of being commended and praised.

Then there are those who might acquire their wealth lawfully and avoid unlawful sources of income, and donate to mosques, yet also be deluded in two ways. The first is ostentation and desire for renown and praise, for there may be poor people in their neighborhoods or cities who have a greater need for donations. If there are already enough mosques to accommodate the congregational prayers, which is their only purpose, there is no need to build them on every street and lane when there are needy people to help. The only reason they find it easy to spend on mosques is that their having done so will become known to the public. When they hear people singing their praises, they suppose that they are working for God, when in fact they are working for something else. God knows best what they truly intend, and will judge them accordingly. The second aspect to their delusion is that they spend money on decorating mosques with elaborate ornamentation that is not permissible because it distracts the faithful from their prayers and keeps them from concentrating and maintaining presence of heart, which is the entire purpose of prayer. Whenever they are so distracted, whether during prayer or outside it, the responsibility will

fall upon whoever built the mosque, for it is not lawful to decorate mosques in such ways. Husaynⁱ ؑ said, "When the Messenger of God ﷺ was about to build his mosque in Medina, Gabriel came to him and said, 'Build it seven cubits high, and do not decorate it or engrave on it.' Such people mistake wrong for right, placing full reliance on it, and are deluded in doing so."

Then there are those who donate money to charity for the poor and needy, the reward for which they nullify by holding large public events for this purpose, as some poor people are in the habit of expressing gratitude and publicizing good deeds. However, they dislike giving charity secretly, and if a poor person keeps their donations quiet, they see this as treachery and ingratitude. They might even let their own neighbors go hungry. Ibn 'Abbāsⁱⁱ ؑ said, "At the end of time, many will go on the Pilgrimage without having the means to do so, but will find the journey easy, and plentiful provisions will be laid on for them. Yet on the journey home they will be deprived and plundered, their camels bearing them here and there between the wastelands and the dunes, showing no interest in or concern for their travelling companions."

Then there are those who hold onto their wealth tightly, spurred by avarice, but engage willingly in whatever acts of worship require only bodily action and not spending, such as fasting by day, praying by night, and reciting the Qur'ān. They are deluded, for ruinous miserliness has captured their hearts, and what they really need to do is to uproot it by giving away their wealth. Instead, however, they busy themselves with other kinds of virtuous deeds. They are like a man into whose garment a snake slithers, but who instead of saving himself from this immediate peril goes looking for some ginger to settle his stomach. What good will that do if the snake

i The *Ihyā'* attributes this to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī rather than Ḥusayn.

ii The *Ihyā'* attributes this to Ibn Mas'ūd.

should bite him? Someone said to Bishr al-Hāfi,ⁱ "So-and-so does much fasting and praying." He replied, "Silly fellow! He is doing another man's work instead of his own. His work is to feed the poor and give to the needy, which would do him more good than making himself hungry and wearing himself out with prayer, all the while amassing the riches of the world and withholding them from the poor."

Then there are those who are so dominated by miserliness that they can bring themselves to pay the zakat, but no more; and even then they choose the least valuable of their possessions to donate, things that they would not even wish to keep. For the recipients they choose poor people who already work for them, or whom they may need to hire in the future, or anyone from whom they think they can get some kind of advantage. They might donate to someone nominated by an important person whose favor they would like to win. All of this spoils the intention behind the charity and renders the deed void. The one who does it is deluded: he thinks he is obedient to God when in fact he is wicked, for he worships God while seeking recompense from someone else. Such are the delusions of the wealthy.

Then there are those people, whether they are wealthy, poor, or somewhere in between, who are deluded by attending gatherings of remembrance, thinking that this is all they need. They do so regularly, supposing that they will be rewarded merely for listening to a lesson without acting upon what it says. They are deluded, for the virtue of gatherings of remembrance lies in how they arouse one's desire to do good works; if they do not encourage this, there is no good in them. Likewise, the desire to do good is only useful if it is acted upon; otherwise it is useless. A person might be deluded

i A Sufi ascetic, born near Marw in Central Asia, who settled in Baghdad and died there in 227/841-2.

by the admonition he hears, or perhaps be moved emotionally as women often are, so that he begins to weep. He might hear a frightful warning and exclaim, "God forbid! We seek refuge in God!" and other such expressions, thinking in his delusion that this must be the sum of all virtue. He is like a sick person who attends a meeting of physicians and hears them describing treatments, but does not do anything about it, and then imagines that he will be cured; or like a hungry person who thinks that it is enough merely to hear delicious foods being described. If an admonition does not change an attribute within you in a manner that results in a change of action, such that you approach God Almighty and turn away from the world, then this admonition will be an argument against you, not for you. If you think otherwise, you are deluded.

The Delusion of Aspiring Sufis

Those who aspire to follow the Sufi way may be deluded in a great many ways, especially in our times, except for those whom God protects. Some of them are deluded regarding clothing and comportment; they resemble the real Sufis in their dress, manner, speech, conduct, rites, and terminology. They resemble their outward states in matters of song, dance, purity, and prayer. They sit upon mats with their heads bowed, and put up their hoods as if engaged in contemplation, breathing deeply; they speak with low voices, and sometimes cry out in ecstasy, and so on. Yet after learning all this they suppose that it is enough to save them, and do not trouble themselves with any kind of spiritual struggle or discipline. They do not keep vigilant watch over their hearts or purify themselves inwardly and outwardly from sin, whether gross or subtle. Yet all of this is indispensable for the true Sufi. What is worse, they freely engage in unlawful and doubtful things, accept gifts from rulers, squabble over pennies, and envy one another over trifles. If one

of them gets in the way of the desires of another, he will not rest until he has paid him back for it. The delusions of such people are obvious. They are like an old lady who hears that great heroes and warriors have their names written in the king's registry, so she dons a suit of armor and goes off to the king and presents herself to him at the next military inspection. When she is discovered, the guards say, "Are you not ashamed to mock the king in this way? Throw her to the elephants!" And they throw her down, and the elephants trample her to death.

Then there are those who are still more deluded. They find it difficult to live the life of a Sufi, being content with simple clothing, food, marriage, and dwelling, but they still desire to display themselves as followers of the Sufi path. So they forsake their silken garb and procure patched garments made with expensive luxurious materials, and elaborately ornamented prayer mats more valuable than the silk they gave up. They do not avoid even outward sin, let alone inward. Their only desire is to live comfortably and enjoy the gifts of the rulers, yet they imagine themselves to be righteous. Such people harm the Muslims worse than thieves do, for they steal away hearts with their fine appearance, and other people follow them into ruin. Others who discover their abuses think that all Sufis must be that way, and so issue blanket condemnations of Sufism.

Then there are those who claim to have received mystical revelations, to have witnessed the Real, to have passed through spiritual stations, to have become grounded in experiential witnessing, and to have truly become near to God, and yet know nothing of these matters but their names. They pick up certain ecstatic words and phrases and repeat them, supposing that this constitutes the most sublime knowledge that there has ever been. They look down scornfully upon jurists, reciters, and scholars of hadith and the other sciences, to say nothing of common people. A farmer or a weaver might give up his labor to keep their company for a few

days, and learn those corrupted phrases from them and repeat them as though speaking from pure revelation and divulging precious secrets. He will come to disdain worshippers and scholars alike, and say that the worshippers are no more than hired laborers, while the scholars are simply veiled. He will claim to have arrived at God and to be one of those brought near Him, but in reality he is a wicked hypocrite in His sight, and the true masters of the heart recognize him as an ignorant fool. He has not attained knowledge, refined his character, performed any good actions, or kept watch over his heart, but only pursued base desires and grabbed onto some pieces of drivel. It would have been better for him to occupy himself with something beneficial.

Then there are those who go beyond that, by performing good works, seeking lawful provisions, and engaging in scrutiny of their hearts. Yet anyone of them might lay claim to spiritual stations such as asceticism, reliance, contentment, and love, without understanding the true nature of these stations or their requirements, signs, and perils. One might claim ecstasy and say that he is utterly consumed with love for God, despite entertaining corrupt thoughts about God that amount to heresy or unbelief. This means that he is claiming to love God before even knowing Him, which is altogether inconceivable. What is more, he does not refrain at all from engaging in things that God abhors, but gives his senseless desires precedence over God's commandments, not realizing that all of this is contradictory to love. Another might incline towards contentment and reliance on God, and try to prove it by heading out into the wilderness without provisions. He does not understand that this is an innovation that the Companions and predecessors of this Community never practiced, although they knew better than he what reliance is. They did not equate reliance with endangering oneself and failing to take proper precautions. They would take precautions but would rely on God, not on the precautions; this

fellow, on the other hand, might not take any precautions, yet still rely on some other means of causality in which he trusts. In every true spiritual station there lies a delusion into which people may slip. We discuss how such blights make their way into these stations in the Quarter on the Ways to Salvation (*rub' al-munjiyāt*) in *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn*.

Then there are those who limit their food intake to that which they can be certain is lawful, yet do not scrutinize their hearts or bodies in any other way but that. One of them might go to great lengths to ensure the lawfulness of his food, clothing, and livelihood, yet not understand that God wants His servants to strive for perfection in all matters of obedience, not only some. Anybody who pursues some but neglects others is deluded.

Then there are those who lay claim to good character, humility, and tolerance and set out to serve the Sufis, holding great gatherings and undertaking to serve them—but they use this as a snare to amass wealth and worldly advantages. Though their only motive is wealth and pride, they act as though they mean only to serve with humility. They make a show of deference, when in fact their desire is to lead. They amass great quantities of unlawful and doubtful gains and spend them on those they claim to serve, thereby gaining many followers and renown far and wide. One of them might accept gifts from rulers and spend it on them, or take offerings from rulers and tyrants and donate it to the Sufis to fund the Pilgrimage. They claim that their intention is merely to donate to righteous causes, when in fact it is all ostentation and the pursuit of renown, which is why they neglect all of God's commandments and are happy to receive and spend unlawful wealth. Someone who donates unlawful money to fund the Pilgrimage is like someone who when repairing a mosque plasters its walls with manure and other impure substances, thinking that he has carried out a real refurbishment.

Then there are those who engage in spiritual struggle, refinement of character, and purification of the soul, but go to such extremes that they make it their vocation to seek out the flaws and ruses of the soul. They spend all their time engaged in guarding themselves against the soul's imperfections and coming up with more and more complex ways of describing its blights, saying, "This is a defect of the soul, and to be unaware that it is a defect is a defect in itself," and so on *ad infinitum*. They squander their time on this because they remain bound to their souls and never connect with their Creator. They are like someone who spends all his time studying the times of Ḥajj and the possible impediments to it, but never actually goes on the Pilgrimage. He is deluded if he thinks that sufficient.

Then there are those who go beyond this level and begin to travel the path, and the doors to gnosis open for them; but once they get the first whiff of its scent they are so delighted with its wonders that their hearts become attached to observing and pondering them, and exulting in how those doors were opened to them but are closed to others. This is delusion, for the wonders of the path of God are endless, and he who stops to marvel at each of them will never move swiftly enough to reach the goal. They are like someone who goes to visit a king but sees by the gateway to the palace forecourt a garden containing flowers and lights the like of which he has never seen; so he stops to look at them, but is so entranced by them that he misses his appointment with the king and returns empty-handed.

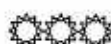
Then there are those who go beyond these, too, and do not become distracted by the lights that shine upon them as they follow the path, nor by the generous gifts that they are given. They do not turn to them or veer towards them, but continue earnestly forward. But when they have almost arrived, they mistakenly think that they have reached the end already, and they stop and go no

further. They are wrong to do so, for God, Incomparably Perfect and Exalted is He, has seventy veils of light and darkness, and whenever the wayfarer reaches one of those veils he may think he has arrived. This is alluded to in the Words of the Almighty concerning Abraham ﷺ: *When night darkened around him, he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said, 'I love not those that set' (Qur'ān 6:76).*

There are a great many veils in this station. The first veil between the servant and his Lord is his own self, which is a tremendous, divinely bestowed entity and is one of the lights of God Almighty—by which I mean the inmost secret part of the heart, which reflects the reality of truth as it is, so that it seeks out the entire world and encompasses the forms of all creation. It is then that its light shines brightly, for all of existence manifests in it as it truly is. At first it is veiled by the niche that covers it, but when its light bursts forth and the beauty of the heart is unveiled as the Light of God shines upon it, a person may look at his own heart and cry out, dazzled by the beauty that emanates from it, "I am the Real!" But if what lies beyond this does not become clear to him and he remains fixed in that position, he will be ruined. That is the manner in which the Christians viewed Christ ﷺ: they saw the light of God shining upon him, and so they committed their error. It is like someone who sees a star reflected in a mirror or a pool and thinks that the reflection is the star, and in his delusion reaches out his hand to grasp it.

The many types of delusions that can arise on the path to God could not be discussed exhaustively, even in whole volumes, or done full justice to without explaining all of the facets of these subtle sciences. That is something for which no permission exists, although it may be permissible to speak of these delusions in order to safeguard against them.

All success is from God. He is my Sufficiency, and a Guardian most excellent; and there is no power nor strength but through God Almighty.





DEAR SON

Ayyuhā al-Walad





*In the Name of God,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

Author's Introduction

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds. May blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muḥammad and all his Family.

There was an advanced student of Zayn al-Dīn Ḥujjat al-Islām Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, may God sanctify his spirit, who had studied diligently under him, mastering many subjects and attaining many virtues of the soul. One day he was thinking about his situation when the thought came to him, "I have studied so many subjects and spent my life seeking knowledge, but it is time for me to determine exactly what, of all I have learned, will be most useful to me in the grave and at the Resurrection. I must also know what is of the least benefit, so that I may give it up. For the Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Dear God, I seek refuge with You from knowledge without benefit.'" This thought kept nagging at him until finally he wrote to his teacher Imam al-Ghazālī to ask for his opinions, advice, and prayers. He noted in his letter that although the Imam's writings such as the *Ihyā'* and others did contain the answers to his questions, he would be grateful if his teacher could write a summary of the things he needed the most, on a few pages that he could carry with him for the rest of his life. In reply, the Imam wrote the following treatise, or letter (*risāla*). And God knows best.

I

Dear son,

May God grant you a long life in obedience to Him, and guide you along the path of His beloved ones. Know that first and foremost, advice must be sought from the Messenger ﷺ. If his advice has reached you, what need have you of mine? And if it has not, then tell me what you have learned in all these years.

2

Dear son,

One of the many pieces of advice that the Messenger of God ﷺ gave to his Community was: "The sign that God has turned away from someone is that he concerns himself with things that are none of his business. If a man spends a moment of his life on anything other than the purpose for which he was created, he may well spend longer regretting it. If a man reaches the age of forty and his good side still does not outweigh his bad, he ought to prepare himself for Hell." This is advice enough for people of learning.

3

Dear son,

Advice is easy to give, but difficult to take. It is bitter to those who have a taste for base desires, for their hearts are attached to forbidden things. This is especially true of those who pursue formal knowledge for self-betterment and worldly advancement, since they suppose that knowledge alone will be enough to save them and that they have no need for action. That is what philosophers are prone to believe. Glory be to Almighty God! They do not know the simple truth that unless knowledge is acted upon it

is a proof against you, not for you. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The person punished most severely on the Day of Resurrection will be a learned man in whose knowledge God placed no benefit."ⁱ

It is related that someone saw Junaydⁱ in a dream after his death and asked him, "What news, Abū al-Qâsim?" He replied, "All those expressions have floated away, all those allusions are gone, and nothing has benefited us but the prayers we performed in the dead of night."

4

Dear son,

Do not be bankrupt of righteous works, or devoid of spiritual states. Be certain that knowledge alone is not enough. If a courageous, battle-hardened man were travelling through the countryside wearing ten Indian swords and other weapons besides, and a terrifying great lion charged at him, do you think the weapons would defend him on their own without his needing to wield them? Of course they would only defend him if he used them. Just so, if a man studies a hundred thousand scholarly questions and masters them, but then does not act upon them, they will be of no use to him. Or consider this: if a man is suffering from fever and jaundice, which can only be treated with ginger and barley water, he will not recover until they are used. A poet said,

You may pour out two thousand goblets of wine,
But you'll feel no rapture until you've drunk some!

ⁱ A celebrated mystic of Baghdad and one of the leading authorities on Sufism (d. 297/910).

You might study for a hundred years and collected a thousand books, but only with action can you prepare yourself for God's mercy. *Man shall have only what he strives for* (Qur'ān 53:39); *whosoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous work* (Qur'ān 18:110); *in recompense for what they used to earn* (Qur'ān 9:82); *Truly those who believe and do righteous deeds shall have the Gardens of Paradise as their home to abide in forever, never desiring to leave them* (Qur'ān 18:107–108); *[Mankind are in a state of loss]...save for those who repent, and believe, and do right* (Qur'ān 25:70).

Consider this hadith: "Islam is built upon five things: testifying that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, observing prayer, paying zakat, fasting Ramaḍān, and performing pilgrimage to the House if able to make the journey" (Bukhārī 8). Faith is to utter with the tongue, believe with the heart, and act with the limbs. There are countless proofs for the necessity of action. It is true that it is only by the grace and favor of God that anyone can reach Paradise, but this is after preparing for it by obedience and worship, for *Truly the mercy of God is ever near to the doers of good* (Qur'ān 7:56).

It may be objected that it is possible to Paradise by faith alone. To this we say that it is indeed possible—but when will it be reached, and how many a difficult obstacle must be surmounted to reach it? The first of these obstacles is faith itself: can anyone be sure that his faith will not be snatched away, so that he ends up dismayed and empty-handed? Ḥasan al-Baṣrīⁱ said, "God will tell His servants on the Day of Resurrection, 'Enter Paradise, by My mercy, and divide it among yourselves according to your works.'"

i The celebrated ascetic of the Followers (*Tābi'ūn*), the second generation of Muslims (d. 728).

Dear son,

As long as you do not work, you will have no reward. It is related that a man of the Israelites worshipped God for seventy years, and God wanted to show him to the angels; so He sent him an angel to inform him that despite his worship he was not fit for Paradise. Upon hearing this, the devotee replied, "We were created for worship, so we must worship." The angel returned saying, "My God, You know best what answer he gave." God said, "Since he has not turned away from worshipping Us, in Our grace We shall not turn away from Him. My angels, bear witness that I have forgiven him!"

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Call yourselves to account before you are called to account, and weigh your deeds before you are weighed."² 'Ali ؓ said, "Anyone who thinks he can arrive without effort is a wishful thinker, and anyone who thinks that with effort he is sure to arrive is over-confident in himself." Hasan [al-Baṣrī] said, may God have mercy on him, "To ask for Paradise without [doing pious] actions is a kind of sin." He also said, "True realization lies in ceasing to pay regard to the work, not in ceasing to work."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The intelligent person is the one who calls himself to account and works for what will come after death. The fool is the one who pursues his base desires, yet expects all kinds of things from God" (Ibn Mājah 4260).

Dear son,

Many a night you have spent reviewing lessons and studying books, denying yourself sleep! And yet I do not know what motivated this. If it was to attain worldly advancement and profit, and to surpass

your peers, then woe betide you, and betide you again! If it was to revive the Law of the Prophet ﷺ, refine your character, and break your evil-enjoining soul, then blessed be you, and blessed again! The poet spoke truly when he said:

To lose sleep over anything but Your Face is a waste;
To weep for want of anyone but You is all in vain.

7

Dear son,

Live as you wish, you will die; love whom you wish, you will part with them; do as you wish, you will be repaid accordingly.

8

Dear son,

What have you gained from all your study of theology, disputation, medicine, administration, poetry, astronomy, prosody, syntax, and morphology, other than a life squandered? By the majesty of the Lord of Majesty, I have seen in the Evangel of Jesus ﷺ, "From the moment the dead man is placed upon the bier until he is set down beside the grave, God in His glory asks him forty questions. The first is, 'My servant, for years you maintained your purity in the sight of mankind, yet not for one moment did you maintain your purity in My sight.' Every day He looks into your heart and says, 'How much you do for the sake of others, while surrounded by My generosity! Are you deaf, that you cannot hear?'"

Dear son,

Knowledge without action is madness, and action without knowledge counts for nothing. If knowledge does not keep you from sin or impel you to obedience today, it will not keep you from the fire of Hell Tomorrow. If you do not act today, or make up for the days gone by, Tomorrow at the Resurrection you will be saying, *Send us back, that we may do right!* (Qur'ān 32:12). Yet the only reply will be, "Fool, that is where you have come from!"

Dear son,

Put aspiration in your spirit, defeat in your ego, and death in your body. Your home is the grave, and the residents of the grave are expecting you to join them any moment. Beware, beware, lest you go to them without any provisions. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه said, "These bodies are either cages for birds, or stables for beasts." Consider which of these you are: if you are one of the lofty birds, then on hearing the summons of *Return to your Lord* (Qur'ān 89:28), you will fly upwards until you alight upon the highest towers of Paradise; as the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "The Throne of the All-Merciful shook when Sa'd ibn Mu'adhⁱ died." God forbid that you be one of the beasts; as God says, *They are like livestock—indeed, they are further astray* (Qur'ān 7:179). Never feel sure that you will not fall from the comfort of the world into the pit of Hell.

i Sa'd (d. 5/627), chief of the tribe of Aws in Medina, was one of the most staunch, influential and beloved Companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

It is related that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may God have mercy on him, was given some cool water to drink, and as he took the cup he fell unconscious and dropped it. When he came to his senses someone asked, "What happened, Abū Sa'īd?" He replied, "I thought of the vain hope of the people of Hell, when they will say to the people of Paradise, *Pour on us some water, or some of what God has provided you!* (Qur'ān 7:50)."

I I

Dear son,

If knowledge alone were sufficient for you and you needed no actions as well, there would be no point in the call, "Is there anyone petitioning? Is there anyone seeking forgiveness? Is there anyone repenting?" It is related that a group of the Companions mentioned 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar to the Messenger of God ﷺ, who commented, "What a fine man he is; but if only he prayed at night!" He ﷺ also told one of his Companions, "O So-and-So, do not sleep too much at night, for one who sleeps too much at night will be left impoverished on the Day of Resurrection."

I 2

Dear son,

And for part of the night, keep vigil (Qur'ān 17:79)—this is a command; *they would seek forgiveness before the dawn*—this is praise; *the seekers of forgiveness before the dawn*—this is remembrance. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Three voices are beloved to God: the voice of the rooster, the voice of someone reciting the Qur'ān, and the voice of those who seek forgiveness before dawn."

Sufyān al-Thawrī said, may God have mercy on him, "God Almighty created a wind that blows before the dawn to carry invocations and petitions for forgiveness to the Supreme King." He also said, "At the beginning of the night, a herald cries from beneath the Throne, 'Let the worshippers rise!', and they stand in prayer for as long as God wills. Then at midnight a herald cries, 'Let the devotees rise!' and they stand and pray until dawn has almost arrived. Then a herald cries, 'Let the seekers of forgiveness rise!' and they rise and seek forgiveness. When dawn comes, a herald cries, 'Let the heedless rise!' and they rise from their beds like the dead mustered from their graves."

13

Dear son,

It is related that one of the counsels of Luqmān the Wiseⁱ to his son was, "Dear son, do not let the rooster outdo you in shrewdness: he calls out before the dawn, while you are sleeping." How well he spoke who composed these verses! –

A dove cooed in the dead of night
 Upon a branch, while I was sleeping.
 I am false, for were I truly a lover,
 The doves would not beat me to weeping;
 I claim I am lovesick for my Lord,
 Yet I weep not, while beasts are weeping!

i A renowned ascetic and scholar of the second generation (d. 161/778).

ii The ancient sage for whom Chapter 31 of the Qur'ān is named.

14

Dear son,

All knowledge lies in knowing just what obedience and worship are. Obedience and worship mean following the Lawgiver's every command and prohibition, in word and deed, so that whatever you say, do, or abstain from doing is in accordance with the Law. For example, if you were to fast on the day of 'Īd, or pray wearing stolen clothing, you would be guilty of disobedience and sin, even though fasting and prayer are acts of worship.

15

Dear son,

Your words and actions must conform to the Law, for any knowledge or action that does not conform to Law is misguided. You must not be misled by the ecstatic utterances of the Sufis, for walking this path is a matter of struggling to sever the appetites of the self and slay its base desires with the sword of spiritual discipline, not fanciful words and riddles. Know that for the tongue to be set free while the heart is stuffed with heedlessness and lust indicates an evil destiny. As long as you do not sever the appetites of the self and slay its vain desires through sincere striving, your heart will not be brought to life by the lights of gnosis.

Know also that some of the questions you have asked me cannot be answered in writing or even in conversation, as long as you do not reach the state where you recognize their true nature. Otherwise it is impossible to know them, for they are matters of experiential taste, and such matters cannot be described in words. One cannot know sweetness or bitterness without tasting it. It is said that an impotent man wrote to a friend of his asking him to describe sexual pleasure to him. His friend wrote back, "I always

thought you were only impotent, but now I know that you are an impotent fool! That is a pleasure that must be experienced firsthand; it cannot be described in words or writing."

16

Dear son,

Some of your questions are of that kind, while the kind that can be answered are covered in *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and elsewhere. Nevertheless, we will touch on some of them here as well. To begin with, the wayfarer upon the spiritual path must have four things. The first is sound doctrine, untainted by innovation. The second is sincere repentance, unspoiled by a relapse into sin. The third is to settle your disputes so that no one has any claim over you. The fourth is to attain enough knowledge of the Law to be able to obey God's commandments properly, and sufficient knowledge of others sciences to secure one's salvation.

It is related that [Abū Bakr] al-Shibli,ⁱ may God have mercy on him, studied under four hundred teachers, and that he said, "I studied four thousand hadiths and then selected a single one of them to act upon, disregarding everything else, because after contemplating it I realized that my salvation lay entirely within it, as if the knowledge of all mankind from first to last were contained in it; so I found it sufficient. It was what the Messenger of God's ﷺ said to one of his Companions: 'Work for the world according to how long you will live in it; work for the Hereafter according to how long you will remain in it; work for God according to how much you need Him; and work for Hell according to how much you could bear it.'"

i A Sufi shaykh of Baghdad, of Persian origins (d. 334/945-6).

Dear son,

If you know this hadith you need not know much more. Reflect also on the story of how one day Shaqīq al-Balkhī asked his companion Ḥātim al-Aṣamm,ⁱ may God have mercy on them both, "What have you gained from keeping my company for thirty years?" He replied, "I learned eight things which I hope will be enough to save my soul." Shaqīq asked what they were and Ḥātim replied:

"Firstly, I looked at people and I noticed that every person has a dear one, a beloved one, some of whom accompany them as far as their final illnesses, some all the way to the grave, after which they leave them all alone. Never did I see any of them accompany his beloved into the grave. I contemplated this and concluded that the best beloved a person could have would be one who joined him in the grave and kept him company there. I could not find anything to fit that description except righteous works. So I made them my beloved, so that they might become a lamp for me in the grave and comfort me rather than leaving me all alone.

"Secondly, I observed that people follow their vain desires and rush to satisfy the whims of their souls; so I pondered the Words of God Most High, *But as for those who feared standing before their Lord, and restrained the soul from caprice, Paradise will be their home* (Qur'ān 79:40–41). I was certain that the Qur'ān is true and truthful, so I proceeded to oppose my soul and struggle against it, and I denied it its desires until it was content to obey and submit to God, Infinitely Perfect and Exalted is He.

"Thirdly, I observed that everyone strives to gather the things of the world and then hold onto them; so I pondered the Words of God Most High, *What is in your keeping will come to an end, but*

i Two early Sufis of Khorasan (d. 194/810 and 237/852 respectively).

what is in God's keeping will endure (Qur'ān 16:96). So I offered all my worldly possessions to God Most High and distributed them along the poor, so that God Most High would hold them in trust for me.

"Fourthly, I observed that some people think that their nobility and prestige comes from having many kinsfolk and relatives, and they become deluded with them; others take pride in their great wealth and many children. Others suppose that glory lies in seizing the possessions of others by force and spilling their blood; others still imagine that it lies in extravagant spending and waste. I contemplated the Words of God, Exalted is He, *Truly the noblest of you in God's sight are the most God-conscious of you* (Qur'ān 49:13), and I opted for God-consciousness, believing that the Qur'ān is true and truthful, while all their ideas are false and fleeting.

"Fifth: I saw that people blame and backbite one another because of envy over wealth, status, and knowledge. I contemplated the Words of God Most High, *We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the present life* (Qur'ān 43:32), and I realized that since God apportioned all things before time began there is no reason to envy anyone, and I was content with whatever God apportioned to me.

"Sixth: I observed that people become enemies with one another because they fight over certain assets and objects of desire. I contemplated the Words of God Most High, *Truly Satan is an enemy to you, so treat him as an enemy* (Qur'ān 3:56); and I realized that it is not right to have any enemy other than Satan.

"Seventh: I saw that everyone strives his utmost to obtain the best provisions and livelihood that he can, even if this means straying into doubtful or unlawful things, and even if it means abasing and humiliating himself. I contemplated the Words of God Most High, *And there is not a creature that crawls upon the earth but that its provision depends on God* (Qur'ān 11:6), and realized that my

provision is the responsibility of God, Exalted is He, and that He has guaranteed it. So I busied myself with worshipping Him and lost interest in everything else.

"Eighth: I saw that everyone depends on something created; some on gold and silver coins, some on property and estates, some on trades and crafts, others on their fellow men. I contemplated the Words of God Most High, *And whosoever trusts in God, He will suffice him. Truly God fulfils His command. God has ordained a measure for all things* (Qur'ān 65:3). So I put all my trust in God, for He is my sufficiency and an excellent Guardian."

Shaqīq said, "May God Most High grace you with success. I have looked at the Torah, the Evangel, the Zabūr,ⁱ and the Qur'ān, and found that all four of these Scriptures revolve around these eight lessons. To live by them is to live by those four Scriptures."

18

Dear son,

From these two anecdotes it will have become clear to you that you need not pursue a great deal of knowledge. I shall now explain what is required of anyone who wishes to travel the path to God.

First, the wayfarer must have a shaykh, a spiritual guide to instruct him on how to shed his bad characteristics and replace them with good ones. Spiritual nurture is akin to how the farmer plucks out thorns and digs up weeds from among his crops, so that they will grow straight and true. The wayfarer must have a shaykh to guide him on the path to God Most High; for God sent a Messenger to mankind to guide them to His path, and when he ﷺ departed, he left behind him vicegerents to take his place in guiding people to God. Any fitting successor to the Prophet ﷺ

i A scripture usually identified with the original Psalms of David.

must be a learned man, but not every learned man is worthy of this vocation. I shall explain to you in general terms some of the signs of one who is worthy, so that not everyone may claim to be a spiritual guide.

The spiritual guide must be one who turns away from love of the world and status. He must have followed a master with insight whose chain of transmission can be traced back to the Master of Messengers ﷺ. He must have mastered self-discipline through denying himself food, speech, and sleep, and engaging in much prayer, charity, and fasting. By following his own master, he must have made the virtues his own: patience, prayer, gratitude, reliance, certainty, contentment, tranquility of soul, forbearance, humility, knowledge, truthfulness, modesty, fidelity, dignity, serenity, thoughtfulness, and so on. Such a man is one of the lights of the Prophet ﷺ and is qualified to be a guide to others.

Such men, however, are exceedingly rare—more scarce than red sulfur. If you are fortunate enough to find such a man as we have described, and if he accepts you as a disciple, you must respect him outwardly and inwardly. Outward respect lies in refraining from contending or arguing with him about anything, even if you know that he is mistaken. Nor should you set down your mat in front of him unless it is time to pray, and then you must pick it up again once the prayer is finished. You should not perform much supererogatory prayer in his presence. You must do as the shaykh commands you, to the best of your ability.

Inward respect means that whatever you hear or receive from him outwardly, you must not deny it inwardly, whether in word or in deed, lest you be tainted with hypocrisy. If you are unable to do this, you must leave his company until your inner being conforms with your outer.

You must avoid sitting with immoral people, to keep your heart clear of camaraderie with the devils who dwell among the jinn

and mankind, so that it is protected from Satan's touch. In every situation, you must choose poverty over wealth.

Know also that Sufism requires two key qualities: uprightness with God, and being untroubled by people. Any person who is upright and shows people good character and forbearance is a Sufi. Uprightness means to sacrifice your selfish interest for the sake of what is truly best for you. Good character with people means that you do not seek to bend people to your will but rather bend yourself to their will, as long as they do not contravene the Law.

You also asked me about servanthood to God. It lies in three things: adherence to the Law, contentment with destiny and God's decree, and seeking to please God rather than yourself.

You asked about total reliance upon God. It means to have unshakable belief in God and His promise; it is to believe that what God has destined for you will surely come to you, even if everyone in the world were to strive to prevent it, and that nothing will come to you that God has not destined, even if they were all to help you to achieve it.

You asked about sincerity. It means for all of your deeds to be devoted to God Most High, for your heart to set no store by people's praise, and to be unconcerned by their criticism. Know that ostentation arises from undue reverence for people and can only be cured by recognizing that they are entirely subject to the divine Omnipotence and are no more able to help or harm you than inanimate objects are. That is how to rid yourself of the impulse to show off to them. As long as you believe that they possess power and will of their own, showing off will never be far away from you.

Dear son,

The rest of your questions are either things I have covered in my books, or things that are forbidden to set down in writing. Put your knowledge into practice, and things you do not know will be revealed to you.

Dear son,

After today, do not ask me about anything that confuses you, except in the language of the heart. God Most High says, *Had they been patient until you came out to them, it would have been better for them* (Qur'ān 49:5). Take the advice of Khidr ؑ, who said, *Do not question me about anything until I first mention it to you* (Qur'ān 18:70). Do not be hasty, but wait until its time comes, and it will be made plain for you to see. *Soon I shall show you My signs, so seek not to make Me hasten* (Qur'ān 21:37). Do not ask me before the time comes. Be certain that you will not arrive unless you travel; as God says, *Have they not travelled in the land and beheld...?* (Qur'ān 30:9).

Dear son,

By God, if you travel you will see marvels at every stage. Give fully of your spirit, for that lies at the core of all this. Dhūl-Nūn al-Miṣrī,ⁱ may God have mercy on him, said to one of his students,

i An Egyptian ascetic, and one of the greatest early Sufi authorities (d. 245/859 or 248/862).

"If you are able to give your spirit fully, come. Otherwise, do not concern yourself with the trifles of the Sufis."

22

Dear son,

I shall give you eight pieces of advice. Accept them from me, lest all your learning be to your detriment on the Day of Resurrection. Do four things, and avoid four. Here are the things to avoid.

First, you must avoid debating with anyone as far as you are able, for there is much evil in debate, and its sin is greater than its benefit. It is the source of every blameworthy trait: ostentation, envy, pride, rancor, enmity, boasting, and more. If something arises between you and another person or persons, and you intend that the truth of the matter be brought to light rather than be lost, it is permitted to discuss it. However, there are two signs that this intention is true. The first is that you do not care whether you win or lose the debate as long as the truth comes out. The second is that you would rather discuss it in private than in public.

Let me tell you something else besides: to ask about a challenging problem is to present the sickness of one's heart to the physician, and the answer is his attempt to cure the ailment. Ignorant people are diseased in their hearts, and the learned are physicians. The imperfect scholar cannot administer the treatment to full effect; and the perfect scholar does not treat every patient, but only those he has reason to hope will accept the treatment and make a recovery. If the sickness is chronic or fatal and cannot be cured, the physician will be forced to conclude that the patient will not accept the treatment and that it would be a waste of time to try.

Know also that the malady of ignorance is of four kinds; one can be treated, the other three cannot. The first incurable kind is that of a person who poses questions out of envy and hatred.

The more excellent, eloquent and lucid the answer, the stronger his hatred, enmity and envy become. The right course is not to respond to him. As the saying goes:

You may hope to make a friend of every enemy,
Except for one who hates you out of envy.

You must turn away from such people and leave them to their sickness, for God Most High says, *So shun him who turns away from Our Remembrance and desires nothing but the present life* (Qur'ān 53:29). An envious person, with everything he says or does, lights a fire in the harvest of his good deeds: "Envy consumes good deeds just as fire consumes kindling."ⁱ

The second kind of ignorance is that which arises from stupidity. This too is incurable: as Jesus ﷺ said, "I did not fail to raise the dead, but I failed to cure the stupid." A man may study for a short while and learn a few things about the sciences of reason and revelation, and then pose idiotic questions to someone who has spent long years in the mastery of those sciences, imagining that they will be as puzzling to this great master as they are to him. If he does not know this much, his question can only be born of stupidity, and there is no use trying to answer him.

The third kind of ignorance is that of a person who seeks guidance but does not have the wit to understand the words of the great masters and instead tries to bring them down to his own low level of understanding. He poses his questions from a true desire to benefit, but he simply does not have the capacity to understand such things, and so one should not try to answer him either. As the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "We Prophets have been commanded to speak to people according to their understanding."

i This is a well-known Prophetic hadith (Ibn Mājah, *Sunan* 4210).

The fourth kind of ignorance, the one that is curable, is that of an intelligent person who seeks guidance and is not dominated by envy, hatred, capriciousness, or desire for status and wealth. He seeks the straight path and does not pose his questions out of envy, mischief, or a desire to test his teacher. That is curable, and you may answer his questions—indeed, you are obliged to do so.

The second thing you must avoid is becoming a preacher, for therein lies great evil unless you first practice what you preach, and then tell it to others. Reflect upon what Jesus ﷺ was told: "Son of Mary, preach to yourself. If you take heed of your own preaching then you may preach to others. If not, then be ashamed before your Lord." If you should have the misfortune to be compelled into this vocation, beware of two traits.

The first is pretentiousness involving the use of extravagant and artificial turns of phrase, exaggerated cries, and over-embellished poetic language. God hates pretension. A person who goes beyond the limits of pretention only displays his ruined inner being and the vacuity of his heart. The meaning of a reminder is to think about Hell and one's shortcomings in service to one's Lord, and to reflect upon one's past and how one has wasted one's life on things that do not concern one, and upon one's future and how one runs the risk of dying without faith. It is to imagine how it will be when the Angel of Death comes, and whether or not one will be able to answer the questions that Munkar and Nakīr pose in the grave. It is to ponder how one will fare at the Resurrection and its horrors, and whether one will pass safely over the Bridge (*Ṣirāṭ*) or fall into perdition, so that one keeps these things in mind and does not become unmindful and indolent. Stoking these fires and facing these calamities is what is called "reminding." "Preaching" means informing other people about them, and warning them of their shortcomings and helping them to see their flaws, so that they feel the heat of these fires and are disturbed by these calamities, and

reflect upon their past lives in the same way, and how they have wasted them in disobedience to God. If you saw a flood approaching a house with a family inside, you would cry out, "Look out, look out! Get away from the flood!" In such a moment, would your heart feel the desire to address them in flowery, pretentious language? Of course not. The same ought to apply to preaching.

The second trait to avoid is the desire to stir up the people in your gathering so that they display excitement and tear their clothes and people say "What a fine gathering this is!" All of that is born of nothing more than desire for the world and heedlessness. However, your sole aspiration ought to be to call people from the world to the Hereafter, from disobedience to obedience, from avarice to asceticism, from stinginess to generosity, from delusion to God-consciousness. You ought to make them love the Hereafter and hate this world, and teach them the knowledge required for worship and asceticism; for it is human nature to stray from the Law, pursue things that displease God, and develop base character traits. Implant dread in their hearts and souls, and warn them of the terrors they may face, and perhaps their inward qualities and outward comportment may change for the better, and they may direct their desire towards obedience and renounce sin. That is the way of preaching and admonishing. Any other kind of preaching is a nuisance for the one who speaks it and the one who hears it; it is even said that such a preacher is a ghoul or a demon that carries people away from the path into ruin. It would be better for people to flee from him than to pay him heed, for he will do more damage to their faith than Satan ever could. Anyone who has the authority to see such preachers removed from their pulpits and silenced ought to see it done, for to do so is part of the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

The third thing you must avoid is mixing with high officials and rulers. Do not see them at all, for great evil lies in seeing them and

keeping their company. If you have the misfortune to be compelled to do so then refrain from praising and flattering them, for God is angry when wicked men and tyrants are praised. To pray that they be granted long lives is tantamount to celebrating that God be disobeyed upon His earth.

The fourth thing you must avoid is accepting gifts from rulers, even if you know that they are lawful. This is because coveting their gifts ruins your religion, for it tempts you to flatter them, take their side, and approve of their tyranny. At the very least, accepting their gifts and benefiting from their worldly status will cause you to feel love for them, and to love someone necessarily means to hope that they live a long life—which in this case would mean hoping for God's servants to continue to endure their tyranny, and for their despoiling of the world to persist. What could be worse for your religion and your prospects in the Hereafter than this? Beware of being deceived by the tempting of devils, or allowing anyone to convince you that it is better to accept money from them and give it to the poor since otherwise they would only spend it on iniquity and sin. The Devil has deceived many people with this approach, as we have explained in detail in *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.

Now we come to the four things that you must do. The first is to behave with God in a manner which you would accept from your own servant, not in a manner that would irritate or anger you if he did it. If you would not accept something from your own servant, who is only your servant in a figurative sense, then surely you could not accept it for God, Who is your true Master.

Secondly, treat others as you would like them to treat you, for no one's faith is complete until he loves for others what he loves for himself.

Thirdly, if you read or study or anything it should be something that rectifies your heart and purifies your soul. If you knew you had no more than a week to live, you would not concern yourself

with the sciences of jurisprudence, ethics, legal principles, theology, and other such matters, for you would know that they could not do you any good then. Instead you would concentrate on keeping watch over your heart, getting to know the attributes of the lower soul, and turning away from worldly attachments. You would purify your soul of blameworthy traits and devote yourself to loving and worshiping God and acquiring good qualities. Yet no day or night passes for anyone when their death may not come.

Fourth, do not accumulate more of the world than what suffices for one year, as was the Prophet's ﷺ custom with his wives. He said, "Dear God, make the provision of Muḥammad's family sufficient." Nor did he do this for all his wives, but only for those of them in whose hearts he saw weakness. For those of them who had certainty, he would keep no more than enough provisions for a day and a half.

23

Dear son,

Hear one last thing from me, and reflect upon it so that you may find deliverance in it. If you were informed that the sultan was coming to appoint you his minister within the week, you would spend the entire week attending to everything you knew he would notice when he came: your clothing and body, your home and its furnishings, and so on. Think about what I mean by this, for you are a man of understanding; and for such a man one word ought to suffice. Remember that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "God does not look at your appearances or your deeds; He looks at your hearts and intentions." If you wish to know about the heart's states, consult the *Iḥyā'* and my other books. This knowledge is obligatory for all, while all other knowledge is only a collective

obligation, as long as all that God has made compulsory is upheld. May He grant you success in attaining it.

24

Dear son,

I have answered all of your questions, and now it is up to you to act accordingly. Do not forget me in your righteous supplications. Speaking of which, you asked me to recommend a supplication you might read. You will find suitable supplications in the authentic hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ. Recite this prayer when you have time, especially after your ritual prayers:

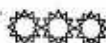
Dear God, I ask You for bounty that is complete, protection that is constant, mercy that is all-inclusive, and wellbeing that is assured; for provision that is amplest, life that is happiest, favor that is fullest, blessings that are most widespread, grace that is sweetest, and kindness that is closest.

Dear God, be for us and not against us! Dear God, conclude our lives with felicity, and grant us our hopes and more besides, and vouchsafe us wellbeing by day and night, and bring us at last to Your abiding mercy. Pour down Your clemency upon our sins, favor us immeasurably by correcting our faults, and make God-consciousness our provision. Let our striving be for Your religion, and our reliance and trust be in You alone.

Dear God, make firm our footing upon the straight path, and protect us in this world from any cause for regret in the Hereafter. Lighten our burden of sin, grant that we live righteous lives, and protect us from every evil. Save us from Hell, us and our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters—by Your mercy, O Mighty, O Oft-Forgiving, O Generous, O Concealer, O All-Knowing, O All-Compelling, O God, O God, O God! By Your mercy, Most Merciful of the Merciful, First of the First, Last of the Last, Lord

of Irresistible Power, Comforter of the Destitute, Most Merciful of the Merciful! There is no god but You! Glory be to You! Truly I have been one of the wrongdoers.

May God bless our master Muḥammad and his Family and Companions, one and all. And praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.





ENDNOTES

THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE (*Bidāyat al-hidāya*)

Author's Introduction

- 1 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan* 2620 with a similar wording.
- 2 'Irāqī attributes this narration to al-Daylami in *Musnad al-Firdaws*.
- 3 Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-imān* 1642.
- 4 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 83.
- 5 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 53.
- 6 This hadith is related by Ibn Mājah, *Sunan* 4250, and several others.
- 7 Aḥmad, *Musnad* 21296, with "misguiding leaders" rather than "evil scholars."

Chapter 1: Obedience

- 1 Tabarānī, *Kabīr* 11104.
- 2 Bazzār, *Musnad* 109.
- 3 Aḥmad, *Musnad* 16007.
- 4 Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* 17.
- 5 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 614 with a similar wording.
- 6 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 591 in a shorter form.
- 7 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 8404 with a similar wording.
- 8 Nasā'ī, *Kubrā* 10330, with a shorter version.
- 9 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 11137 with a similar wording.
- 10 Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād* 12/358.
- 11 Nasā'ī, *'Amal* 864.
- 12 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id* 16857.
- 13 Ibn al-Sunni, *'Amal* 83.
- 14 Ibn al-Sunni, *'Amal* 670.
- 15 Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id* 3505.
- 16 Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 425.
- 17 Daylamī, *Musnad al-firdaws* 2017.
- 18 Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* 525.
- 19 'Irāqī (*Mughnī* 1/187) attributes this narration to al-Khaṭīb.
- 20 Aḥmad, *Musnad* 9691.
- 21 Daylamī, *Firdaws* 2979.
- 22 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 3416.
- 23 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 3424.

Chapter 2: Avoidance of Sin

- 1 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 25.
- 2 Aḥmad, *Musnad* 10925.
- 3 Haythamī, *Majma'* 13128.
- 4 Haythamī, *Majma'* 313.
- 5 Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab* 10501.

Chapter 3: Good Conduct in the Company of Others

- 1 Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-īmān* 670.

COUNSELS TO A DEAR BROTHER (*Al-Risāla al-wa'ziyya*)

- 1 Aḥmad, *Musnad*

GOOD CONDUCT AND MANNERS IN ISLAM (*Al-Adab fi al-dīn*)

- 1 Cf. Qur'ān 9:40.

THE DELUSIONS OF MANKIND (*Al-Kashf wal-tabyīn fi ghubūr al-khalq ajma'in*)

The Delusions of the Disbelievers

- 1 Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, 7857.

The Four Chief Categories of Deluded People

- 1 Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, 1642.
- 2 Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, 7937.

DEAR SON (*Ayyuhā al-Walad*)

- 1 Tabarānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 507.
- 2 Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-Sunna* 14/309.

